AUGUST 1918
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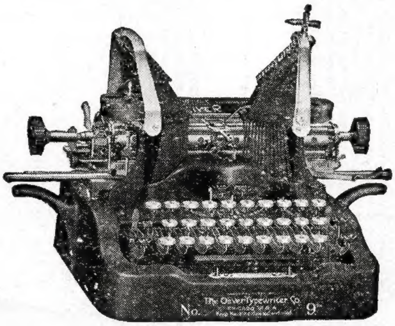

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THE GREEN BOOK

RAY LONG, Editor

VOLUME XX NUMBER 2

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Maudie Haywood, Frank Wakefield, Ina Hayward, Sam Lewis, Primrose Seaman, Sam Dody, Kitty Glasco

Squaring Washington Square

A DELIGHTFUL CRITIQUE OF THE NEW PLAYS

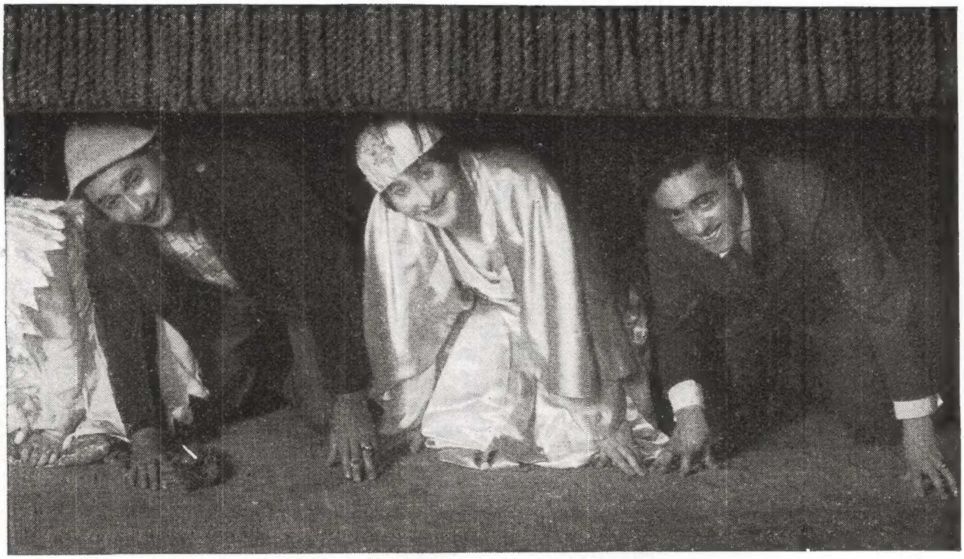
By Channing Pollock

AT the end of a season that died, as most decrepit seasons do, in giving birth to a burlesque and a musical farce or two, the most important event was the collapse of the Washington Square Players.

Little known outside of New York, this group of producers, which went into the hands of a receiver last month, rose, reached its zenith and set in three short years. A circle of amateurs from Greenwich Village, it began modestly in February, 1915, by giving two performances a week in the tiny Bandbox Theater. Before long the tyros had achieved the dignity of a "movement" and the honor of being resoundingly abused by David Belasco. Lauded by local critics, imitated by aspiring if inexperienced reformers of the stage throughout the country, the company spent two years at the Comedy, and then, announcing suspension, was taken over by a firm of vaudeville managers. *"C'est la guerre!"* exclaimed the original sponsors. *"C'est* taking the thing too seriously," ran a scornful explanation which some volunteer sent broadcast to the newspapers. "The Washington Square Players were flattered to death!"

Ultimate collapse is the fate of most "movements" in the theater. As the Washington Square Players succumbed, there sprang into being a new venture, the Actors' and Authors' Theater, which began with bickering and a bill that survived a scant fortnight. Apparently the "commercial managers" are vindicated by history's repeating itself in the case of the noncommercial. They know what the public wants, and are better able to get it. Their proved responsibility gives them first choice of plays from the pens of known writers, first choice of known actors, and the entertainment they supply comes nearer meeting the popular demand.

Nevertheless it is by "movements" that



and Arthur Conrad in "Hello, America!" a burlesque which Mr. Pollock describes as the best of the season.

the theater moves, and the crudity of their presentations, their ultimate smash, amid a chorus of "I told you so!" does not lessen the service of the Washington Square Players. Mr. Belasco, with his great talents and infinite resources, has succeeded brilliantly this year with a conventional melodrama and a flimsy farce, neither adding one iota to the dignity or intellectual progress of the institution of which he is the undisputed head. In the same period the young people at the Comedy have acted Shaw and Oscar Wilde, represented two new and exceedingly promising playwrights, Eugene O'Neill and Susan Glaspell, and produced half a dozen remarkable one-act pieces from hitherto unheard-of sources, including George Cronyn's vital and vigorous "The Sandbar Queen." They have introduced two novelists besides Susan Glaspell—Zona Gale and Theodore Dreiser—as dramatists, the former through "Neighbors" and the latter through "The Girl in the Coffin," and have added four or five other names to the scant list of men and women writing effectively for our stage.

In three years the Washington Square Players acquainted us with unknown works worth knowing from the French, the Italian, the Spanish, the Russian, the Japanese and the German. They exhumed three plays by Maurice Maeterlinck, together with a notable and impressive tragedy, "The Life of Man," by Andreyeff, and interesting efforts that otherwise might have remained buried, from the pens of Molière, De Musset, Bracco, Schnitzler, Wedekind, Tchekhov, Strindberg, Benavente and Hermann Bahr. No other one management has done so much for the unproduced American playwright. The regular theater owes to the Washington Square Players the discovery and development of Philip Moeller, who, before he wrote "Madame Sand" for Mrs. Fiske, had invented a school of burlesque all his own in "Helena's Husband," "The Roadhouse in Arden" and other plays. Distinctly the freshest and most original vein of its season was struck by Edward Massey in "Plots and Playwrights;" a promising newcomer was unearthed in Miles Malleson, whose "Youth," with all its faults, was superior to many comedies that win success on Broadway; and Basil Lawrence, in "Licensed" and "Another Way Out," showed himself gifted with dramatic instinct and a rare sense of satire.

"Eugenically Speaking," "Overtones," "The Clod," "Children," "The Magical City," "The Sugar House," "Trifles," "Bushido," "The Last Straw," "A Private Account," "The Hero of Santa Maria," "In the Zone," "Neighbors," “Suppressed Desires” and “The Home of the Free”—here are fifteen one-act plays that cling to the memory after busy seasons in which more pretentious productions have been forgotten. Of the fifteen authors only four were known when the discoverers marched up from Washington Square. Professor Baker could not have done more at Harvard; and great managers have done a good deal less.

Dramatic novelties were many on the bills at the Bandbox and the Comedy. First and foremost among these, of course, was the lovely black-and-white pantomime “The Shepherd in the Distance;” and “Pierre Patelin,” a French farce of the fifteenth century, was as notable a thing, in its way, as Granville Barker’s revival of “The Man Who Married a Dumb Wife.” Histrionism was so plainly the weak point of the Washington Square Players that their establishment of a school of acting suggested the old simile of “the blind leading the blind,” but nevertheless in three years they brought forward Roland Young, José Ruben, Margaret Mower, Helen Westley, Florence Enright, Arthur Hohl, Frank Conroy, Robert Strange and Saxon Kling. They were responsible for the Provincetown Players, the Greenwich Village Theater and for various other venturesome bands, vigorous, explorative and untrammeled by tradition, that have quickened and extended interest in dramatic art.

Photograph by Apeda, New York

Mr. and Mrs. Edouard de Kurylo, who appear as a special feature at the Actors’ and Authors’ Theater.

In recording theatrical failure it is only just to inquire whether the failure was on the part of producers or of public. Very often, as has been said frequently in these pages, plays fail for reasons unrelated to their merit. Sometimes they fail because they are too good. It is one thing to woo success by experiment, by appeal to the intelligent and sophisticated taste, and another to win it by treading well-worn paths, by filling the demand for “sure-fire hokum” and sentimental baby-food.

The longest runs of last season and this were achieved by “Turn to the Right” and “Business Before Pleasure.” Neither could have been set down as a brilliant achievement for a body of students and essayists in the theater. It is easy to find the flaws in a fallen structure. The flaws in the structure of the Washington Square Players were

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Laura Nelson Hall in "Her Honor the Mayor"—"a play full of undigested theater and empty of life."

obvious even before it fell—obvious, but not altogether discreditable. Youth and the assertive, venturesome, independent spirit are apt to fling too far; but new blood, and the experimental tendency, are of great value in any established institution. Possibly these tyros came to take themselves too seriously. If so, these are faults by no means confined to tyros. Certainly they brought to our theater ideals and aspirations, education and cultivation, knowledge of literature and the drama, vigor and progressive thought not too common among successful managers. Their influence was real, and though the Washington Square Players be dead, their spirit will go marching on.

The Actors' and Authors' Theater

THE Actors' and Authors' Theater was founded with the laudable purpose of eliminating, or lessening, professional waste. Actors temporarily "at liberty"—euphemism for "out of a job"—may fill in their time here, at a small salary, thus displaying their wares and paying their landladies. Authors with plays to try are offered the same opportunities. The Theater, so to speak, is a show-window.

Clifton Crawford and some of the girls in "Fancy Free"—which "errs on the side of fragility and daintiness."

Photograph by White, New York

This idea, not unlike what came to be the working out of the Washington Square, is capital. As has been said, any idea that makes for experiment in the theater, and for the infusion of new blood, is a good idea. Curiously enough, up to date the present venture has done more in the way of pumping up old blood. Excellent actors, who had dropped out of the procession somehow, and almost been forgotten, have come to the fore again and reminded us of their abilities. If the plan prospers, young people will get an amount of experience not easily gained in these days of long runs. Already the movement has provided material for those regular managers who haven't the taste, the courage or the enterprise to make experiments on their own. If there are really, and continue to be, players who, as in Kipling's millennium, do not work for money and do not work for fame, "but each for the joy of the working," great things may come of the project.

The trouble, up to date, is that this project is an ACTORS' and Authors' Theater, instead of an AUTHORS' and Actors'. Everything presented at the Fulton has been well played, but hardly worth playing. The first bill, which enlisted the histrionic services of Hilda Spong, Albert Gran, Olive May, Amelia Summerville, Ada Gilman, Laura Nelson Hall, Marion Kerby, Etienne Girardot—do you remember him as "Charley's Aunt"?—J. Irving Southard, Brandon Hurst, Edward

Fielding, Zola Talma and Mrs. Thomas A. Wise, consisted of an overlong comedy, "The Good Men Do," by Hubert Osborne, who had distinguished himself by spoiling a fertile theme in "April," and a three-act comedy-drama, "Her Honor the Mayor," by Arline Van Ness Hines, full of undigested theater and empty of life. "Her Honor" deserved to be called "The Queen of the Bromides."

FOR its second program, the Actors' and Authors' further invaded the field of the Washington Square and offered four one-act pieces, only the last of which had any particular merit. "Muggins," by Frank J. Gregory, is another faint comedietta of Lancashire, which, as the font of literature, begins to crowd Indianapolis.

Its kinship to "Lonesome Like," recently done at the Comedy, is heightened by the appearance of Whitford Kane, who would be in danger of being set down as a very limited actor but for his superb performance of a daft old miser in Eugene O'Neill's "The Rope," in the last bill of the Washington Square Players. "Muggins" has a minute story, spread over half an hour, relating to a mill foreman supposed to be in love with a young girl, who winds up by proposing to her mother. It is very mildly amusing.

The Brothers Kenneth and Roy Webb contribute two operettas, in both winning the booby prize for lyric-writing. "Art's Rejuvenation" is the kind of platitudinous playlet that comes to every professional reader in thousands from recent graduates of freshwater universities. Sometimes they get acted in the ballroom of the Plaza for the benefit of Mrs. Stuyvesant-Riverside's projected Home for Indigent Insurance Agents. *Art* is dying, and a group composed of *Sculpture, Painting, Poetry* and *Music* stand around and sing that he oughtn't to do it. For years I have thought that, for sheer stupidity and obviousness, nothing could be worse than the modern moralities hashed out of some Encyclopedia of Familiar Quotations and yclept "Everywoman" or "Experience." But there *is* something worse, and it's the modern morality with music.

Painted with a fine brush, instead of with a hose, A. P. Wharton's "Nocturne" would have been very delicate and pathetic. You remember that in the preface to "The Old Wives' Tale" Arnold Bennett speaks of the literary possibilities of the old maid? Mr. Wharton deals with the tragedy of a particularly sour specimen, but he deals with a heavy hand, without insight or finesse or real sympathy, and after interminable preparation he winds up with the conventional dream. In this dream there is a conversation between the spinster and a man in gray tweeds she once saw at a railway station, but it leads to nothing. According to the little fellows, all big fellows are plagiarists. If only Barrie could be induced to plagiarize "Nocturne!" Minnie Dupree, who was an ingénue in the days of Odette Tyler, when ingénues had to act as well as look, plays the spinster.

THE feature of the bill is "The Best Sellers," a really gorgeous burlesque of that kind of fiction, offered, perhaps in atonement for "Art's Rejuvenation," by the Brothers Webb. Successively three books, about the size of a large screen, open their covers, forming a scenic background before which is acted a travesty, first of the story of the American who saves the queen of a mythical kingdom, next of the man and woman shipwrecked upon a desert isle, and finally of the adventures of the Northwest Mounted Police.

The ingenuity of the idea reaches its height in this last, when the characters progress from scene to scene by turning the pages of the book and stepping through them. The absurdities and cheap sentimentality of this kind of trash are delightfully held up to ridicule not the less amusing to me because of a pointed reference to some I have provided myself. Edith Taliaferro is charming in the three travesties, and Regan Hughston acts with a keen sense of satire. It is reported that "The Best Sellers" will be taken into vaudeville.

If the Actors can find a few Authors out of employment to lend a hand in their Theater, there is no reason why it should not be a huge success. Certainly, from an inside viewpoint, it fills a long-felt want.

"Rock-a-Bye Baby"

IN the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thought of light opera. As the season progresses, the opera grows lighter, and its costumes lighter still, until we reach the Ziegfeld "Follies," and the charity that uncovers a multitude of shins. Except for the Actors' and Authors' Theater, late May and early June this year brought no departure from tradition. Theatrical fare was made up of a few tried-and-true successes, like "Tiger Rose" and "Business Before Pleasure," with ten musical plays in a total of twenty attractions.

One of the newest of these, "Rock-a-Bye Baby," at the Astor, presents surprising evidence that good music and good farce do not always make good musical farce. Margaret Mayo's superlatively clever "Baby Mine," upon which the piece was founded, may have been too logical, too closely knit and too swiftly paced for the insertion of song and dance. Or perhaps the song and dance were not inserted with sufficient care. At all events, the two elements here remain as distinct as oil and water. Miss Mayo's continues to be an hilarious play. Jerome Kern continues to be a composer of astonishing fecundity. But just as you get to laughing at the play, you find yourself stopped short by Mr. Kern, and afterward compelled to drag yourself back to Miss Mayo.

As has been hinted, the blame for this attaches partly to adapter Edgar Allan Woolf, who has left Miss Mayo's story practically intact and wedged in Mr. Kern, instead of mixing them. The new characters, who sing and dance, have not been hitched to the plot, so that we find two separate sets of dramatis personæ—one that carries on the narrative and another that carries off the musical honors. Whenever it is necessary for some one to warble, all the people concerned in the farce are sidetracked. Thus Zoie

Photograph by White, New York

"Maytime" has a "novel and interesting story, with unusual sentimental and dramatic values, and such a story is as helpful in musical entertainment as in any other. Every act ends dramatically, and several of its situations leave the auditor moist-eyed."

The Gypsy Girls in "Maytime"—which, with "Business Before Pleasure," shares the distinction of the season's longest run.

Edna Hibbard, Carl Hyson, Eddy Meyers and Alan Hall in "Rock-a-Bye Baby."

Photograph by White, New York

Hardy, who is attempting to win back her husband by pretending to be a mother, at the moment of discovering herself to be the possessor of two infants, instead of one, is obliged to relapse into silence while two unidentified visitors invade her bedchamber and sing "There's No Better Use for Time Than Kissing." Fun fast and furious, at the end of the second act, slows down with a jolt when suddenly translated into a finale, and all the characters leave the stage abruptly, in the third act, at the very crux of the comedy, so that three utter strangers, backed by the ensemble, may give vent to "I Can Trust Myself with a Lot of Girls." The chorus, indubitably comely, is an unexplained intrusion. Musical comedy allows a lot of latitude, but it is difficult to credit a sick-room forever filled with sprightly sprites, and even an interior decorator transcends the probabilities when he drops in with fourteen girls he is about to take to the opera. Comedy does not become musical comedy by the addition of music cues, and "Rock-a-Bye Baby" is merely a farce and a vaudeville show for one price of admission.

Nevertheless, both component parts being good, as aforesaid, and Selwyn & Company having been generous as to gowns and girls, and tasteful as to scenery, there is entertainment at the Astor for the man who has a siding in his one-track mind. Miss Mayo's married babes-in-the-wood, who have become classic in farce, are as amusing as when, in 1910, they began their international career. Mr. Kern's score includes a haunting sentimental strain, "A Kettle Is Singing;" a lively syncopated number, "Little Tune, Go Away;" and a half-dozen other airs. Edward Royce, the most original and finished of our producers of numbers, has done capital work in staging, and the company includes Edna Hibbard, who is as like Marguerite Clark as it is possible to be; Walter Jones, in his original rôle of the involuntary baby-stealer; and Dorothy Dickson, who looks like a *Vogue* cover, dances like Mrs. Castle, and by virtue of these two things seems on the way to great popularity. Also there is Louise Dresser, whose blond beauty is as perennial as Lillian Russell's. "Rock-a-Bye Baby" will solve the problem of the summer evening.

Photograph by Baker Art Gallery, Columbus, Ohio

Raymond Hitchcock in "Hitchy Koo 1918."

"Hitchy Koo 1918"

RAYMOND HITCHCOCK has joined Florenz Ziegfeld and the wrongfully convicted shopgirl of "Within the Law" among those who have lost their names "and been given a number." Henceforth Mr. Hitchcock's shows, like Mr. Ziegfeld's, are to be distinguished, after the fashion of wine and motorcars, by the year of their production. "Hitchy Koo 1918," at the Globe, is of the same genus, genre and species as last summer's original "Hitchy Koo," which is to say that it is quite delightfully mad. "Hitchy"—without the Koo — who does not wait for the critics, but accompanies his performances with a running fire of comment, "calls the turn" exactly when he says: "There's no sense to the darned thing!"

As hitherto, "Hitchy Koo" begins with a personal greeting from its star, who stands in an aisle and receives the audience as it enters. If you want to keep secret your evening's whereabouts, better stay away from the Globe, for Mr. Hitchcock announces each arrival in stentorian tones and with verbal embroidery. After that, the piece proceeds quite soberly until the end of the first scene, when, following an elaborate planting of plot, two lovers square off for a duet. "Take him; he's yours!" interrupts the comedian. "You don't have to sing about it!" A drop-curtain, painted in burlesque of Joseph Urban, with a profusion of Yiddish characters, shuts off tenor and soprano, and that is the end of the plot. A few minutes after, Mr. Hitchcock, as *Horace Plunkett,* of Brooklyn, is seated in the center of the stage with Ray Dooley as his infant child, and a combination rattle and black-jack. When the baby cries, *Horace* hits her on the head with the black-jack. The incident is hilariously funny, and the suggestion valuable.

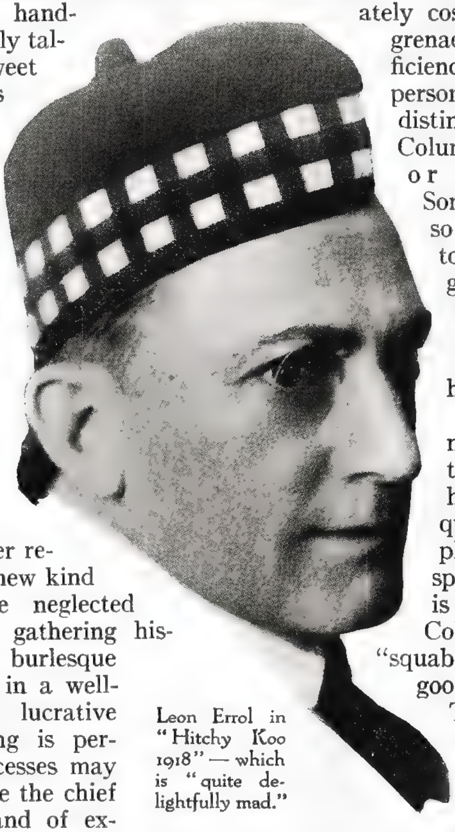
By way of a highly amusing burlesque melodrama, a rousing finale to the first act and a remarkable Oriental dance by Florence O'Denishawn, "Hitchy Koo" progresses to the screamingly funny slapstick climax of what John Corbin calls "a slappy-go-lucky" entertainment. This is an interlude in a kitchen, with Miss Dooley, who is more amusing than most women comedians think they are, as a half-witted scullery maid, and Leon Errol as a drunken chef. Mr. Errol's intoxication has become classic. It affords one of the best arguments against prohibition—though, in that unfortunate event, Mr. Errol's scenes probably would be given a date, like the title, and described as "historic comedy." Be that as it may, the present knockabout, involving the smashing of more china, in ten minutes, than the average cook-lady would render *hors du combat* in a month, is side-splitting beyond description.

Following it, Roy Cummings, formerly of the Winter Garden, makes a laugh-provoking attempt to break his neck, and the performance is concluded suddenly because Mr. Hitchcock discovers that it is eleven o'clock. "Hitchy Koo 1918" is irresistible nonsense throughout, with a pleasant touch of satire and a constant appeal to the eye. The "chorus of forty under twenty" is so lovely as to prompt the warning that Mr. Ziegfeld had better look to his Kay Laurels. Besides the advantages already enumerated it has Irene Bordoni, handsomer and more obviously talented than ever; two sweet singers, in the Kouns Sisters; and a versatile and useful young man named George Moore. The Lady Who Goes to the Theater with Me says "Hitchy Koo" is the only musical show she has seen this season that has enough intermissions.

"Hello, America!"

PERSONS who labor under the impression that the summer revue is a comparatively new kind of entertainment have neglected their opportunities for gathering historical data in the burlesque houses. These spokes in a well-lubricated and highly lucrative "wheel," where smoking is permitted and mental processes may be suspended, used to be the chief diversion of a little band of explorers, including myself, James L. Ford—author of "The Literary Workshop"—and the late Charles Klein. We stopped going, because the performances got to be too refined. Refined burlesque is chop sui generis.

Burlesque theaters offer a different attraction each week, but every year the best of the season settles down for a summer run at the Columbia. "Hello, America!" with "Lewis and Dody—the two Sams—and the American Girl, Primrose Semon," differs from the ordinary revue only in degree. There is the same applicability of title, the same disregard of rhyme and reason, the same speed and noise, the same subtlety of humor and the same manifestation of patriotism by means of red, white and blue trunks. When one comedian says "You don't comprehend" and the other retorts, "I never cop a hen; I always cop a chicken," or the soubrette essays a lyric beginning "An old log cabin down in Tennessee," and is helped out by a chorus appropriately costumed in tights and grenadier hats, only a deficiency of pulchritude and personal talent marks the distinction between the Columbia and the Globe or New Amsterdam. Sometimes there is not so much distinction as to talent. Leon Errol graduated from burlesque, and Broadway has few funnier men than Roger Imhoff and Lew Kelly.



Leon Errol in "Hitchy Koo 1918" — which is "quite delightfully mad."

Lewis and Dody are not very amusing, and the performance they head suffers in consequence, but there is plenty of life and spirit, and if "a woman is only a woman" at the Columbia, and not a "squab" or a "broiler," "a good cigar is a smoke." Tobacco and a modest price of admission put one in a humor to overlook stretches of dullness. The inevitable patriotic finale is exceedingly well done, and the evening is concluded with a minstrel-show that entertains and prompts sentimental recollections. Moreover there are bits of humor no less tickling because unintentional. One of these is a soubrette whose refinement is so great that she pronounces "toe" as though it were spelled "twoe," and another is a lyrical allusion to Russia as "stanch to the last."

"Maytime"

THAT my allotted space permits mention of only seven or eight pieces a month, while eighteen or twenty are produced, accounts for the fact that every

Photograph by Alfred Cheney Johnston

Dorothy Dickson, in "Rock-a-Bye Baby"—a musical comedy which "will solve the problem of the summer evening."

year a dozen or more performances have to worry along without having been reviewed in THE GREEN BOOK. Painstaking selection keeps down the number of these that really call for comment, or that survive long enough to be live topics, but the end of each season finds hits still running without benefit of criticism. To see these plays, after two or three hundred representations, is to see them at a disadvantage, since some of the original spirit unavoidably leaks out, but often it is more interesting to account for success than to speculate upon it.

"Maytime," which opened at the Shubert in August, and after moving to the Forty-fourth Street, and from there to the Broadhurst, shares with "Business Before Pleasure" the distinction of having achieved the season's longest run, is set down as the work of Rida Johnson Young and Sigmund Romberg. As a matter of fact, this is a bit of camouflage. The present unpopularity of Germans serves as excuse for crediting our own countrymen with accomplishments not properly theirs. Thus does questionable honesty masquerade as patriotism. "Maytime" was done here originally under the title of *"Wie Einst im Mai,"* when its book was signed by Rudolf Bernauer and Rudolf Schanzer and its score by Walter Kollo and Willy Bredschneider.

It is not difficult to explain the prosperity of "Maytime." In the first place it has a novel and interesting story, with unusual sentimental and dramatic values, and such a story, the opinion of our managers to the contrary notwithstanding, is as helpful in musical entertainment as in any other. Every act in the piece ends dramatically, and several of its situations leave the auditor moist-eyed. There is a quaint and amusing comedy character in *Matthew Van Zandt,* a young beau in the first episode, which occurs in 1840, and an older beau, with a new wife, in each of the succeeding episodes, taking place in 1855, "in the '80's" and in the "twentieth century." The music is colorful and charming, especially as regards a dance, "Jump Jim Crow," and a waltz, long since epidemic, programmed "Will You Remember?" but widely known as "Sweetheart! Sweetheart!"

It will be seen that the general scheme of "Maytime" is that of "Milestones," carrying successive generations through changed manners and fashions. *Richard Wayne,* an apprentice, loves *Ottillie,* daughter of *Colonel Van Zandt,* and in 1840, when Ann

Photograph by De Strelecki, New York

Irene Bordoni—"handsomer and more talented than ever"—in "Hitchy Koo 1918."

Street was "uptown," they plant the verses of a love-song—the waltz-theme mentioned—at the roots of an apple tree in the garden of the homestead in Washington Square. *Ottillie* is forced to marry a suitor of her own station, and *Wayne,* returning from Africa a millionaire, finds the tree grown and his sweetheart of happier days the mother of a little *Ottillie.* It is the new generation, finally, that renews the old romance, finding the love-verses at the roots of a dead apple tree.

Aside from the unavoidable loss of spirit already mentioned, the performance was capital when I witnessed it early in June. First honors belong to William Norris, a fine actor of vast and varied experience who plays *Matthew.* Peggy Wood is very charming as *Ottillie,* and Charles Purcell an agreeable *Richard.* The ensemble might be described as a chorus of twenty over forty.

Kate Stout in "Flo-Flo"—a piece which "survives by virtue of the popularity of a variety team, Handers and Millis, and of rather unusual economy in costumes."

Photograph by White, New York

"Flo-Flo"

THE run of "Flo-Flo" at the Cort, which began before Christmas, is not so easily explained—except on the ground, set forth last month, that the less fine a work of art, the wider its appeal. No distinction of the least importance separates this show from the burlesque around the corner at the Columbia. Fred de Gresac's book is coarse and commonplace. Every now and again the scant plot breaks into what vaudeville calls "a sidewalk conversation," with witty references to Solomon, New Jersey and the Bolsheviki. The lyrics, by Edward Paulton and Madame de Gresac, are clumsy, and there is nothing fresh in the music of Silvio Hein. The piece survives by virtue of the popularity of a variety team, Handers and Millis, that stretches a hat-spinning specialty through two acts, and of rather unusual economy in costumes. A gentleman seated behind me enthusiastically voiced his discovery of this economy in the course of a choral number, yclept "On the River Nile." "My Gawd," he exclaimed, "they aint got no undershirts on!"

What there is of story concerns *Angelina Stokes,* in love with *Billy Cope,* from Oshkosh, but about to be married, by maternal mandate, to a bogus count. The bogusness is discovered about the time it is disclosed that *Billy* is a millionaire, and there is a reassignment of life-partners. Meanwhile Handers and Millis have danced frequently, Rena Parker has disrobed almost as frequently, and there has been recourse to several stock features of burlesque, such as the comic measurement of Miss Parker, two parades of show-girls, and a song that enables each girl to score individually. The real merit of the performance, aside from the hat-spinners, is its lively tempo, unaffected by more than two hundred representations, and the eccentric comedy of Andrew Tombes, who began his season at the Century. A Spanish girl, Finita de Soria, also evidences talent.

Miss Parker displays her personality—both of 'em, and a good deal besides. The exhibition is not displeasing. Miss Parker, however, sings her speeches and speaks her songs—which reversal of form proves not altogether satisfactory. By all odds the most attractive woman in the company is Louise Beaudet, who it seems but yesterday was being censured for her naughtiness in the title rôle of "Mlle. Fifi" and now plays the mother of *Angelina.*

Photograph copyrighted by Hixon-Connelly Studios, Kansas City

Irene Hayward, in "Hello, America."

How tempus does fugit, to be sure! When "Fifi," adapted by Leo Ditrichstein, was done in February, 1899, the cast included Rose Coghlan, Aubrey Boucicault, Grace George and John T. Sullivan—and I was the dramatic critic of *The Washington Times!*

"Fancy Free"

IF "Flo-Flo" seems rather broader than it is long, "Fancy Free," by Dorothy Donnelly, with lyrics and music by Augustus Barratt, produced at the Astor and moved to the Casino, errs on the side of

Photograph by White, New York

Virginia Wynn, Esther Ingham, Blanche Terrell, Virginia Badger, Ethel Phillips, Alice Taber, Flora Hollister and Nell O'Connell in "Flo-Flo"— the real merit of which Mr. Pollock finds in its "lively tempo." It seems, he says, "rather broader than it is long."

fragility and daintiness. Clifton Crawford's latest vehicle is clever in a static fashion, amusing in a light, aimless, easily forgettable way. Its action, curiously detached from its plot, moves along lackadaisically, with a good deal of bright patter, only occasionally recognizable, and two or three distinctly funny incidents. These incidents, come to think of it, are chiefly Mr. Crawford, who after his own method is quite inimitable. To hear this comedian describe a duck as "an underslung bird with a chronic wiggle," or attempt to make a French girl understand that he is talking about a motorboat, is ample recompense for the temporary suspension of the story.

This story relates to two sisters, *Betty* and *Pinkie Pestlewaite,* who for some flimsy reason go to Palm Beach pretending to be a married woman and a widow. Of course they are beloved by two young men who suppose them to be preëmpted. Of course the supposed dead husband turns up, followed, equally of course, by his real wife. All this is very unimportant, and would be dull except for the pleasant fooling of Mr. Crawford and some very light and agreeable music by Mr. Barratt. "Tinkle-inkle-inkle" has much of the swing of that tune in "High Jinks" from which we have just recovered, and there is charm in "A Cocktail of Flowers" and "When the Moon Shines Down."

Ada Mae Weeks, who danced in "Miss Springtime," dances again here, and with a great deal less reason, sings. She sings so badly and so often, and dances so well, that one wishes her songs and dances might be distributed, with some one else to contribute the vocal introductions, say Marjorie Gateson, who plays the other sister attractively. Harry Conor and a forgivable tenor named Ray Raymond are principals in the supporting company.

"Fancy Free" is nothing to get excited about, but it affords pleasant excuse for idling away an evening.

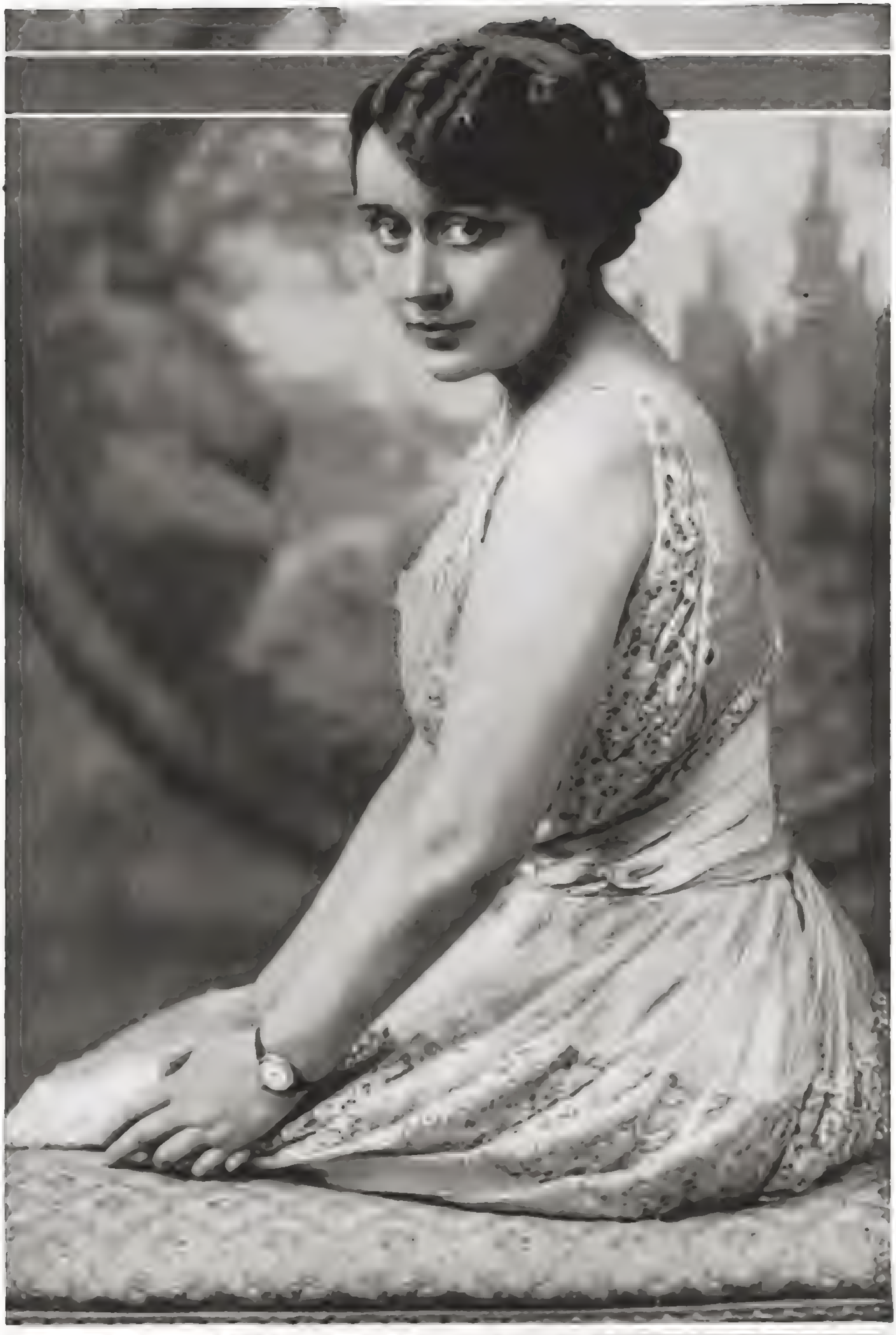
Channing Pollock's brilliant reviews are a regular feature of THE GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE. There will of course be another in the next — the September — issue.

Photograph by Apeda, New York

Alla Nazimova recently made her most remarkable picture, "Revelation." In it she embodied a complex maze o personalities, varying from the profoundly tragic to creatures of elfin lightness—and all this in the portrayal of on character, a vivacious and erratic little artist's model. Mme. Nazimova's leading man in this picture was her hus band, Charles Bryant. "Revelation" happened in the middle of a stage season of Ibsen.

Photograph copyrighted by Ira L. Hill, New York

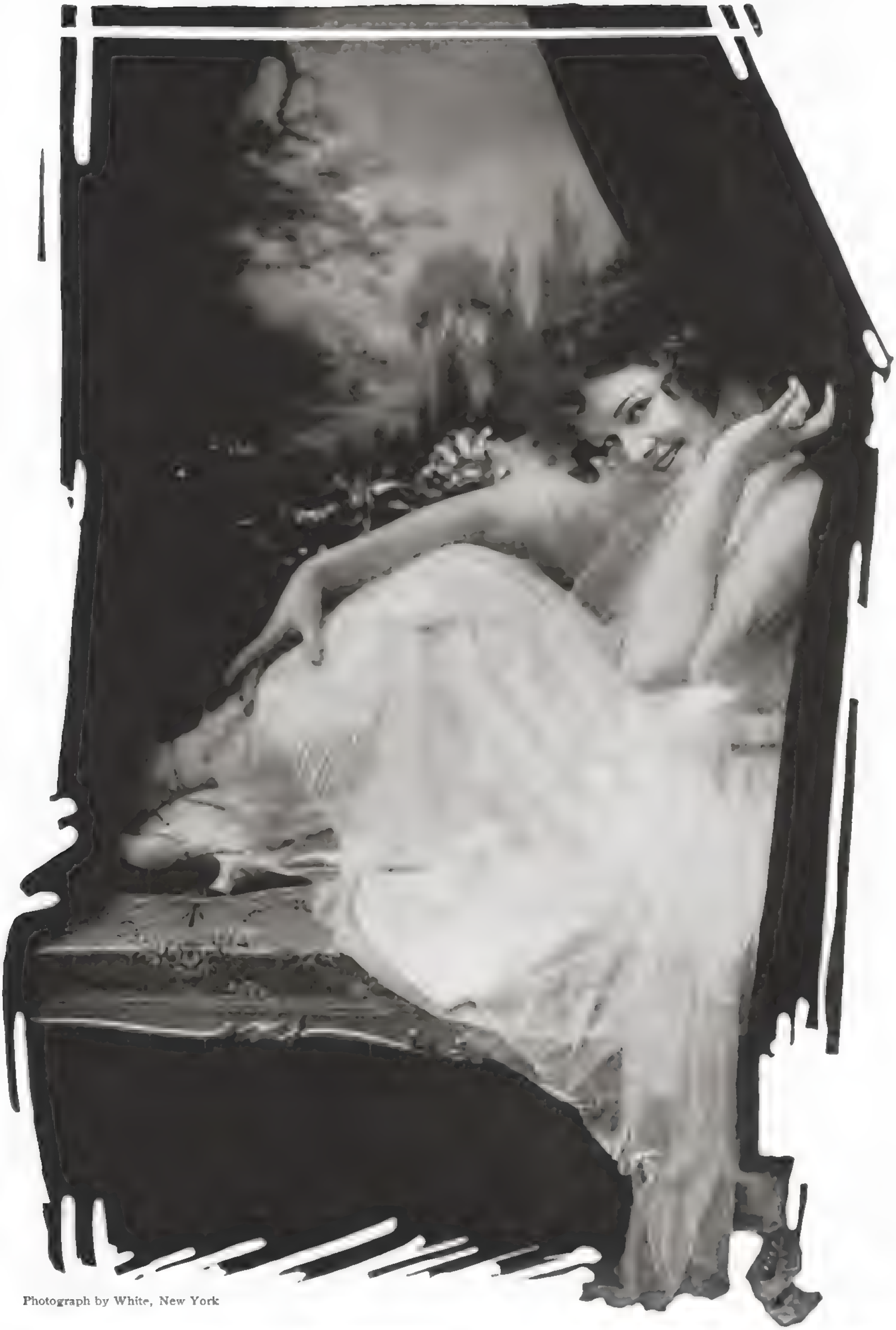
Mae Marsh is one of the few Griffith stars who have succeeded under a banner other than his. The stamp of David Wark seems indelible, and while Miss Marsh—more essentially a Griffith product than perhaps any girl alive—still shows in all her work her long training on Sunset Boulevard, she made a distinguished success in Goldwyn pictures, made in the East, during the past year.



Photograph by White, New York

Mme. Olga Petrova, one of the most expressive screen stars, because she attempts expression least.

Photograph by Matzene, Chicago
Martha Hedman was brought to celebrity by David Belasco and will be especially remembered for her suave and exquisite portrayal of the nurse in "The Boomerang." She has appeared with the Metro Pictures Corporation in Booth Tarkington's "The Turmoil."



Photograph by White, New York

Doris Kenyon is a screen veteran not yet twenty years old. She has appeared frequently in World Film productions and will be remembered as leading woman for Captain Robert Warwick, U. S. A., in several productions. She is a blonde, five feet six inches tall.

Photograph by Campbell Studios

Alice Joyce has for some time been rated as one of the first five screen-players in point of popularity.

Will The Theater Injure the Movies?

By Burns Mantle

Photograph by White, New York

Alla Nazimova alternates between Ibsen and the mere movies.

UNLIKE many of my confrères, I never have been prejudiced against the movie. True, there was a time—it seems ever so long ago now, though I dare say it was no more than eight or ten years—when I considered them an abomination in the sight of the Lord and terribly hard on the eyes. But I never was really prejudiced.

In fact, as I think back upon it I suspect I might have become a first-class movie-fan had it not been for certain discouraging experiences encountered in my early movie adventures. One was the seemingly universal fondness of the movie audiences of those days for the fragrant garlic flower. Another the popular belief of all movie-theater managers that fresh air was thick and interfered with the proper showing of the picture and that therefore all the windows should be closed and the doors hermetically sealed with fat doorkeepers. And a third was the limited repertory of the strong and persistently active movie pianist.

And not having acquired the habit when the habit was popular, I found it hard to pick it up later.

But what a change there has been since then, my masters! Those were the days, if you remember, when we used to wonder what, if any, effect the movies would have on the theater. Now I, for one, am beginning to wonder what the theaters are going to do to the movies.

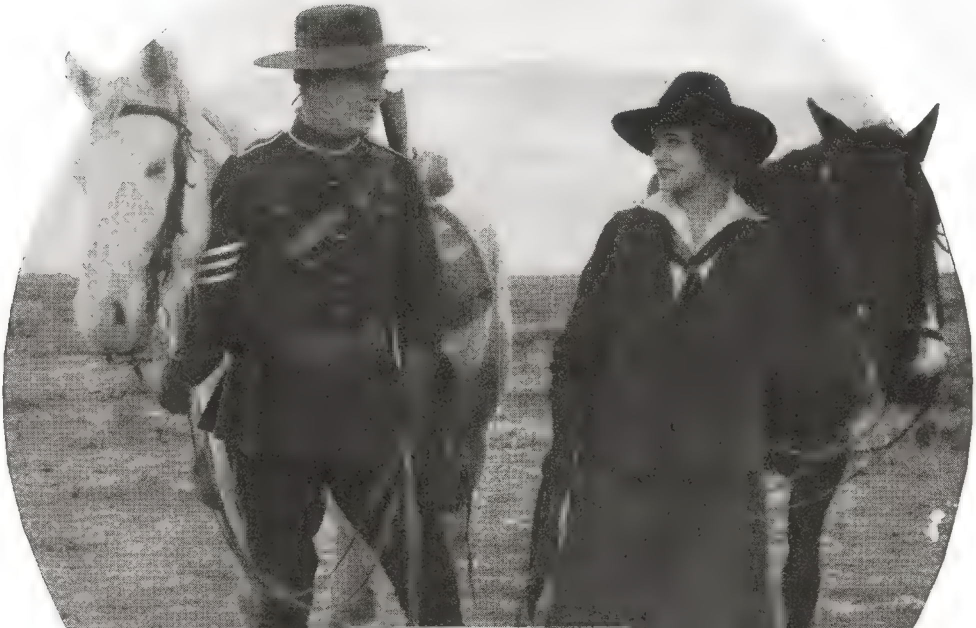
Five or six years ago I was writing an article on the five most popular motion-picture stars—who they were and why they were what they were. Making out a tentative list, I set out to verify it. Into offices cluttered with shipping-clerks and stenographers I went, into theaters small and stuffy, and large and draughty. Of all those I knew who movied I inquired their favorites. I asked the managers who had embraced the cinema who were their most successful stars. And I came home with the conviction confirmed that—

Mary Pickford,
Marguerite Clark,
Anita Stewart,
Clara Kimball Young and
Alice Joyce

were the girls. After them came a respectable deluge of wide-eyed and fairy-formed favorites, and a goodly number of knockabout comedians.

The other day I undertook to check up the present movie situation and again sought an expression of opinion as to the standing of prevailing favorites. Who were the first five to-day?

The search was a different experience this time. Most of the offices had been moved from side-streets into Broadway. The largest of them had invaded Fifth Avenue, where it occupies two or three floors in one of the newest buildings. The managers were old friends I had known prominently in the theater. Cinema-show places had blossomed by the dozen. The gentleman who had begun with a fifteen-hundred-dollar show-room was quartered



Elsie Ferguson in "Heart of the Wilds."

Elsie Ferguson is freely credited with being the screen sensation of the year. Her contract guarantees her six thousand dollars a week.

in a marbled hall before which great lines of patrons waited.

Who were the five popular favorites? It was impossible to agree on five, they told me. Pick five out of fifty? How absurd! Ten? Well, they might agree on ten—or twelve. And from a dozen selected lists, no two of them alike, I decided that to-day

Mary Pickford,
Douglas Fairbanks,
Marguerite Clark,
Elsie Ferguson,
Charlie Chaplin,
W. S. Hart,
Jack Barrymore,
Alla Nazimova,
Madge Kennedy,
Billie Burke and
Pauline Frederick

head the honor-roll. And after them come literally hundreds—but no longer of the curled ringlet and baby-stare school exclusively, and no longer strangers to the legitimate drama.

Compare the two lists, analyze them, and you can write your own history of the moving-picture situation to-day—and to-morrow. It is no longer a question of what the movies will do to the theater, but of what the theater has done to the movies. From a comparison of these two lists of favorites the deduction is obvious—that the cinema has not only caught up with the drama, but that the drama has promptly absorbed the cinema. Hereafter, whether we of the theater who have held a rather light opinion of the movies, bestowing upon them merely a patronizing word occasionally—whether we like it or not, the two forms of entertainment are certain to parallel each other to a very considerable extent. Our people shall be their people, and our plays their plays.

It is a logical evolution, when you stop to think of it. From the day that Adolph Zukor conceived the idea of presenting on the screen "famous plays with famous players" and induced Daniel Frohman to assist him in the establishment of his enterprise, moving-picture producers have striven to deserve favorable comparison with the theater. The striving has not been conscious in every instance, nor half so deliberate as the effort to make money and produce the cheapest grade of picture that would sell. But it has been the constant ambition of the better producer whom the cheaper producer imitates. And not only has it been responsible for the creation of better and better pictures but, fortunately for the future of the industry, it has also been responsible for

Fay Tincher, a favorite comédienne of the screen.

Photograph by Lumiere, New York

Fay Tincher doesn't mind making herself ridiculous if it helps sell the film.

"Cuddles" Edwards is only fifteen years old, but they say she "screens" wonderfully.

the earning of the greatest fortunes.

The moving picture to-day is not a perfect picture, any more than the drama of to-day is a perfect drama. And the growth of the one has curiously paralleled the growth of the other. In the last ten years the movie has practically duplicated the history of the stage of, say, the last three hundred years.

It began with the cheapest kind of knockabout farces; it had its "Ralph Royster Doysters" and its "Gammer Gurton's Needles." It had its spectacle "features" that were not unlike the mystery plays and miracle plays of old. It advanced rapidly to the field of lurid melodrama, train-robberies and hold-ups. It glorified the drama of the frontier, with its cowboys and Indians, because they were active and picturesque. It took naturally to the stunts and tricks the camera made possible and devoted a season or two to auto-wrecks, train-wrecks and shipwrecks; to high dives and head-on collisions.

And then, wearing these out, it sought a reasonable antithesis in the drawing-room drama of the seventies and eighties, the "East Lynnes" and "Camilles," and worked them over and over into a hundred imitative plots. After that it was an easy and logical drop to the slum play and the life-stories of the gangsters and gunmen—and on to the white slaves and the lurid sex-affairs.

Thence the reaction carried it into the cabaret field, where the villains wear dress suits and blow cigarette-smoke into the faces of honest but awkward Western heroes who come to rescue Eastern beauty in distress, just before they (the villains) are sent crashing to the floor.

After the cabaret series came the modern problem plays, with everybody all dressed up but still beset by vices and vampires, and

Photograph by Victor Georg, New York

May Allison, a new screen star.

D. W. Griffith with Lily Elsie and Lady Diana Manners—who helped with the making of his new feature, "The Great Love."

the familiar domestic problems. Which led naturally, considering the character of magazine literature of the time, into the field of sex-propaganda concerning little sister and mother's failure to tell her the true story of that indiscreet and frequently deceitful bird, the stork.

By this time the movie had practically caught up with the legitimate drama and begun drawing on similar sources of supply, duplicating current comedies and farce comedies and all the screenable dramas, whether they were successes or failures in the theater.

When the war came, the trend of taste in the theater was duplicated exactly in the moving-picture houses. There was some slight interest taken in war-plays, but the more insistent call was for comedies and comedy dramas, for cheerful plays to lighten the first-page gloom. That condition continues to-day.

By following the same line of evolution in the screen drama you will easily discover the reason for the gradual passing of the screen favorite of old and the ascendancy of the legitimate favorites of the present. So long as the screen was devoted to those early custard-pie and tumbling-policemen sketches, the custard-pie actors and policemen acrobats were all very well. They were quite as active and twice as funny as any legitimate actor could possibly be. Their heads were harder, and their dignity could stand a lot of punishment.

When the first of the melodramas were staged, there was some little, though not much, demand for trained players, and these were recruited from the melodrama

Above is Marguerite Clark in "Uncle Tom's Cabin"—where by a bit of camera magic she "doubled" as *Eva* and *Topsy*.

Ernest Truex, who is one of the most recent requisitions of the moving-picture producers.

Photograph by White, New York

circuit that was just beginning to feel the competition of the movie. It was possible then for a moving-picture producer to assemble a company of players from any number of stranded road companies at five, ten or fifteen dollars a head for a day of posing. As the demand for their services grew, the best of them devoted all their time to the screen, and the worst of them filled in the extra jobs.

They were still available for the first of the emotional dramas that were screened, and they fitted nicely, or at least satisfactorily, into the costume plays, the slum and gangster and white-slave pictures that followed. But by the time the cabaret and high-life series was reached, the road-actor began to weaken. He could wear a dress suit, but he did not feel or look exactly comfortable in it. He could walk across the polished floor of the Fifth Avenue millionaire, but his progress was hesitating and uncertain. And the actresses, even many of the early favorites, were much less happy and much less attractive in evening gowns than they had been in the rags that were royal raiment when worn for virtue's sake at ten dollars a day.

The demand for actors with reputations began to grow, but the supply was short. Many were called, but few responded. It was too great a risk. How could they ever hold up their heads again at the club, or expect to command the respect of their managers if they permitted themselves, for the sake of a few extra dollars, to be classed with the movie folk? One by one, however, they took the chance; first those who had the least reputation to loose, second those more prominent ones who needed the money, and finally—

The Famous Players' corporation offered Pauline Frederick one thousand dollars a week to go to Rome and be filmed as the heroine of "The Eternal City."

That, as I reread the comment of the time, appears to have been the breaking-point. After that the bars were down, the gates of the new El Dorado were opened and the beginnings of the modern gold-rush had begun.

The growth since then has been both rapid and steady. First the better plays demanded better actors. Better actors and better pictures attracted bigger and better audiences, which in turn demanded larger and finer theaters. And the moment all these demands were met, the lowly movie found itself the legitimate competitor of the theater.

If I remember his repeated statements correctly, D. W. Griffith, still an acknowledged leader among the directors, was in the habit of predicting that stage-trained stars never could hope successfully to replace the movie favorites. They were too conscious, and too set in their ways. They refused to be directed, and as a result there was no opportunity for the development of the screen personality, even if they were so fortunate as to possess it.

He undoubtedly was right in respect to those stage-stars who were the first to try the new work. But he certainly has been proved wrong since then. The acknowledged screen-sensation of this particular season, by the admission of all those authorities, both lay and professional, with whom I have talked, is Elsie Ferguson. And she was a sensation practically from the appearance of her first picture.

Mr. Griffith might say that Elsie Ferguson was the exception necessary to prove his rule, and that she was a perfect screen type, if it were not for the experience of dozens of other actresses who have supplanted or at least duplicated the popularity of the screen favorites of a half-dozen years ago. Madge Kennedy was similarly successful—and Nazimova and Billie Burke, Jack Barrymore, Alice Brady, William Farnum, Fannie Ward; as a matter of record, there have been comparatively few failures among those stage celebrities who have made a legiti-

Kitty Gordon, who declares that being called the best-dressed woman on the screen has cost her a fortune. She has forty trunkfuls of wardrobe—and no money in the bank.

Alice Lee, a Chinese cinema star.

mate try for screen-honors. Not all have been as successful as Elsie Ferguson, and not all are being paid two hundred thousand dollars a year for approximately eight months' work. But so many of them have succeeded that the conclusion is plain that stage training does help.

I asked the smartest man I know in the motion-picture business just what he meant by "screen personality." He explained it by renaming it a "photographic personality"—the picture-values and character-values the camera is able to register. It was the possession of this photographic personality that established the early favorites and held them in high favor so long as they were not asked to do more than exhibit it. But as the demands upon their mimetic and histrionic resources became greater, many of them began to suffer by comparison with their more experienced fellows.

It is not contended that there are no longer picture-favorites who have had little if any stage training. Many of the older favorites are still wonderfully popular. And I should never think of risking my neck by suggesting that Mae Marsh or Mabel Normand, the Gish sisters or the Talmadge sisters, the Alice Joyces or the Clara Kimball Youngs, the Anita Stewarts or the Anna Q. Nilssons, the Dorothy Daltons or the Enid Bennetts, the Edith Storeys or the Beverly Baynes, can possibly be overlooked in even a casual

The Dolly sisters, who have recently gone in for moving-picture work.

survey of the screen situation to-day—or that they will not be present in force five or even ten years from now.

But I do say that the most interesting and the most significant development of the screen these last few years is its frank turning to the stage for stars, and the fixed position they have already made for themselves in the screen-drama.

Not all of them have succeeded, however. I don't suspect even so good an actor as E. H. Sothern will try the screen again, and the country at large was only mildly interested in the elaborately screened pictures of the late Sir Herbert Tree. I hear no wild demands for a return of Robert B. Mantell to the cinema, or of William Faversham or Robert Edeson or William Gillette or Burr McIntosh—all of whom have had a try at it though none, apparently, mastered the art.

And as for the best of the comedians, they have been forced to take quite a back seat. Even so widely popular a lad as George Cohan is unplaced among the big screen-favorites, and Weber and Fields' fame will go down in stage-history for what they did in spoken burlesque rather than because of what they tried to do before the camera. Willie Collier is a good comedian; that much no one will deny. But William without his smart lines and his clever pauses is lost on the screen, or at least on screen audiences. De Wolf Hopper and Raymond Hitchcock are funny fellows—with their deep bass voices to help them. But voiceless they are not so much to look at, and there has been no rush of managers trying to lure them back to Los Angeles for another series of celluloid comedies.

On the other screen we have any number of actors who have thoroughly established themselves with their new public. Montague Love, though an Englishman, having adopted America as his temporary home, is already a big favorite with the cinema-crowd. So are Courtenay Foote, Robert Warwick,—who is now collecting salutes as a captain in the army,—Milton Sills, Aubrey Smith, H. B. Warner, Edward Abeles, Theodore Roberts, Thomas Meighan, Joseph Kilgour, Wilfred Lucas, Frank Keenan, Henry Kolker

Viola Dana in "The Only Road."

Viola Dana might have continued successfully on the speaking stage after her hit in "The Poor Little Rich Girl"—but screen gold tempted her away.

Photograph by Apeda, New York

and any number of other good Lambs. They haven't completely taken over the work assigned in the old days to the Bushmans and the Moores and the Rawlinsons and the Walthalls and the Lockwoods and the Harrons. But they have established new standards in the technique of the picture art for these handsome boys to copy.

So it is with the actresses. Not all of them have been able to do what they hoped to do with the camera. Even so attractive and capable an emotionalist as Jane Cowl failed to register "success;" Mary Garden, they tell me, found the limited spaces of the movie-stage rather cramping; and Maxine Elliott will probably be too busy to return to the screen, once she is established as Mr. Faversham's leading woman next season.

Geraldine Farrar, however, is planning to finance her own pictures and doubtless will employ husband Lou Tellegen as her director. It was in pictures they met and married, and it may be that in pictures they will achieve another fortune or two.

The dancing Dolly sisters flirted with studio offers for a long time before they were finally screened as "The

Million Dollar Dollies," but Irene Castle plunged in long ago, first by way of telling her life-story as it was linked with that of the late Captain Vernon Castle, and later as the heroine of a Pathé serial.

Little Viola Dana is one who never has been able to get back to the stage since she left it to become a picture star. This was just after her success as "The Poor Little Rich Girl." Emmy Wehlen has declared on three different occasions that she would leave the studio and resume singing and dancing in musical comedy, but each time her picture managers have raised her salary to such a figure that she simply could not afford to part with them.

Nazimova, like Arnold Daly, being a success in pictures, plays in them (at a salary of one thousand dollars a day every day she works) until she has paid for as many Liberty Bonds as she thinks she can afford, and then she goes back to the stage for a season in Ibsen drama or such other plays as may appeal to her. She will never lack for offers so long as her managers have the success the Metro company experienced with "Revelation." The first manager who saw the picture paid sixty-five thousand dollars for the first-run rights in the sixty-five theaters he controlled.

Years ago, eight or nine, I think, Gus Edwards adopted a little girl he had seen dancing on the street and took her into his home as his daughter. Later, when she developed a talent for singing and dancing, he made her a part of a vaudeville number he had staged and gave her the stage name of "Cuddles." "Cuddles" grew prettier and more talented as she grew older, and a few months ago the motion-picture scouts, always on the lookout for attractive prospects, found her. Now she has signed a long-term contract with the Paramount company, and at this writing is preparing for her screen début. Her directors are already predicting that she will in time become another Pickford or another Clark, and perhaps she will. She is but fifteen and "screens wonderfully," they say.

I meant to write something about the movie directors and the important part they have played and are now playing in bringing the screen-drama to within approachable distance of the stage. But I could get very little from those with whom I talked. Each admitted, modestly, that he was perhaps the most gifted of the lot, but more than that no one of them cared to venture.

As a matter of fact, they are more responsible than any other one influence for developing and improving the moving picture. They long since carried it photographically to supreme heights, and the last year or two they have devoted at least some thought and some time to the improvement of the stories, the scenarios and the acting of those they direct. In this particular there is still room for improvement. The scenario problem is not yet solved. The demand for pictures is so insistent, and most of them are ground out in such hurried fashion that there is much repetition and much that is trite and discouragingly commonplace as a result. But the general trend is upward, and the going is good.

A GIRL YOU'LL WANT TO KNOW

NAOMI TWAY, the central figure of "Against the Winds," the new novel by Kate Jordan which begins in our next issue, is a girl well worth knowing. And her adventures with life after she discovered her mother's strange secret and after her world had come tumbling about her—these make a novel interesting indeed. Count on taking up a most rewarding story in "Against the Winds"—which will begin, remember, in the September GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale August 12th.

HE'S just a poor rich man who rebels against being supported, but the adventures of his rebellion are interesting indeed. The first of a delightful series by the gifted author of "Toward Morning."

"Peter, Papa would never think anyone *quite* a fool who married *me*," Mrs. Middleton said gently.

Mrs. Middleton's Husband

By I. A. R. Wylie

ILLUSTRATED BY R. L. LAMBDIN

"UGH!"

Strictly speaking, this is not what Mr. Middleton said. Strictly speaking, Mr. Middleton did not say anything at all. He merely emitted a sound—something between a snort, a groan and a growl, which the combined agility of the English alphabet is wholly incapable of reproducing. Coming from behind the fortifications of the *Times* financial supplement, its effect was prodigious. Even Mrs. Middleton jumped, and this in spite of the fact that she had on a new dress, that she faced a full-length Venetian mirror and that she was a remarkably pretty woman.

"My dear, what *was* that?"

She cast a suspicious glance at the toy terrier lying in serene majesty on the best cushion, and Mr. Middleton, being a man of honor, arose in defense of innocence.

"It was me, my dear," he explained justly but ungrammatically. "I apologize; but really, it's enough to make even a human being growl."

"What is?"

"Oh, everything—these strikes—and now my coal-shares have gone up another half."

Mrs. Middleton returned to the happy reflection in the mirror.

"Peter, I'd like to cable that to Papa. He always said he did not believe you knew a wild-cat coal-mine from a tin tack."

"I'm much obliged to Papa," Middleton interrupted bitterly and with a somewhat ponderous endeavor to mimic the delicate suggestion of Fifth Avenue which tinged his wife's conversation. "I'll do him the justice of saying that he never left me in any doubt as regards his opinion of my intelligence. It was extraordinary, the number of ways he found for calling me a fool without actually using the word."

Mrs. Middleton glanced at her husband out of the corner of her eye. He had dropped the financial supplement and was staring gloomily at the Persian carpet as though it had offered him a final and deadly insult. Mrs. Middleton became conciliatory. She perched herself on the arm of his chair; she smoothed his immaculately groomed hair into a feminine ideal of disorder; she kissed him delicately on the disturbed parting.

"Peter, Papa would never think anyone *quite* a fool who married *me*," she said gently.

"I dare say not. I dare say he thought it was a good stroke of business for a penniless barrister—you, a rich American heiress, and I—"

She put her hands over his mouth.

"Peter, is that nice? Besides, it isn't even true. Now I come to think of it, I can't even give you credit for marrying me. To all intents and purposes it was *I* who proposed—at least, I got you into such a corner that no gentleman could have failed to come up to the scratch. Now, wasn't it so? Don't you remember that evening after the theater when Aunt Mathilda 'lost' us and I couldn't remember the name of our hotel, and how we autoed all round New York, and how I cried—on your shoulder?"

Middleton nodded—speech being still impossible.

"Well, of course it was all what Papa would have called a 'put-up job.' " She gave a warm little chuckle. "And I don't regret it a bit. Of course I knew you were dead set on me—everybody knew that; you'd have seen the yellow press large with rumors if only you had kept your eyes open. Instead, you hung round our Avenue like a lost baby elephant, and the very creases of your trousers shrieked hopeless love and all the rest of it. Now a real Yankee would have stepped right up and rung the bell and saved me a lot of bother. But you Englishmen with your honor and your pride—brrh! I'm sure, *I* don't know why I wanted you so badly."

"But you did!" Middleton managed to murmur in muffled accents.

She kissed him.

"Of course I did. Do you think I should have worked so hard otherwise? Why, I got quite scraggy over it. And now, after all, you're not happy." She dabbed her bright eyes with a minute piece of cambric obviously not intended for tragedy, and Middleton opened his mouth to speak. But Mrs. Middleton had not finished.

"It's too bad. Haven't I proved my devotion? Haven't I given up my glorious birthright as a free American woman to come and live in slavery as an English wife? Haven't I made your gods my gods? Haven't I—"

"Susan, my dearest little woman—"

"Don't speak. Haven't I been a good wife?"

"You have." This time he acted with determination. He put his arm round the frail dimensions of her waist and drew her down beside him into the immensity of his luxurious leather-backed chair, where she lay crumpled but contented.

"You're just perfect," he went on. "I quite admit I was awfully in love with you before, but it's nothing to what I am now. I don't know what it is—you're so elusive. One's never quite certain of you—"

"The whole secret of successful matrimony if only we women realized it," Mrs. Middleton supplemented sagely. Then she peeped up at him. "All the same, you're not happy. Now, are you?"

VERY gently he released himself and got up. He stood six feet, a fine measure of English manhood that yet lacked something indefinable. He seemed conscious of the unknown deficiency, for he thumped himself questionably on the chest, then sighed and went over to the window.

"I believe it's my liver," he said drearily.

Mrs. Middleton stamped with as much violence as a Louis XIV heel will allow.

"I believe," she declared, "that when the last trumpet sounds, you English will still be excusing your shortcomings with that hapless part of your anatomy." Then she relented, and coming to his side, rubbed her fair head softly against his sleeve. "You old stupid elephant, what is the matter—really and truly the matter!"

He looked down at her. Although from his elevation there was not much to be seen of her save a mass of fair wavy hair and the tip of a delicate nose faintly inclined to an angle not strictly classical, the prospect should still have been sufficiently attractive to hold his attention. Instead he sighed and turned to the fashionable depression of the square outside.

"I think it *must* be my liver," he repeated with the Briton's religious respect for such matters. "And then—then there is the money, Susan. It weighs on me—it oppresses me. I can't explain."

"It wants explaining," said Mrs. Middleton, wide-eyed. "I've heard of people being oppressed by a good many things, but not money."

"You are different," he interrupted quickly. "You were born to it; your father earned it—you've got some right to it."

"Well, according to your reckoning I ought to endow a home for destitute pigs with it, anyway," said Mrs. Middleton. "Papa always says if it hadn't been for pigs, he would be still sweeping a store. If we owe everything to pigs, surely you don't mind owing everything to me. I'm vastly more capable of receiving gratitude—and much prettier."

He laughed, but a little heavily, as though the laugh came with an effort.

"You dear little woman—that's all very well; but I can't help it. When I see these poor beggars loafing about the streets, I feel guilty. I've done nothing to deserve my better luck. I didn't earn—"

"Well, I guess that is true," she agreed gayly, and then as she saw his face, she turned and laid her two small hands on his shoulders. "Peter, I'm sorry I've laughed; now I'll try and understand. But isn't your English conscience a wee bit ponderous? After all, you spend your days in dealing out money to the more or less deserving—"

"It's the least I can do," he put in. "I'm responsible."

"And you have me. Doesn't that make up for the responsibility?"

He looked down at her, his lips smiling, his fine features still overcast with trouble.

"That's just it; I haven't got you. I'm just a sort of *chargé d'affaires* for you. What do I see of you? It takes all my day to take care of the money and spend it justly. You have your clothes, your friends, your social obligations. And when we are together, there's always a butler or a footman to keep us company." He began to pace restlessly the length of the great, luxurious room. "It would be absurd if it wasn't so tragic. We're just slaves to that infernal money."

"Peter, you are absurd and tragic all in one."

"I tell you, the responsibility bothers me night and day."

"Then bother the responsibility, Peter!" She ran up to him, the soft rustle of silk skirts sounding musically in the stillness; and by tiptoeing she managed to take his face between her hands. "Peter, you're right. Don't you think I want you too? Don't you think I miss my monstrosity of an English husband when I sit chatting with those dowager frumps who only tolerate me because Papa made a million in pickled pork? I'm sick of it—just as sick of it as you are. Let's throw it all to the winds—"

"*Richesse oblige!*" said Peter stubbornly.

"*Richesse* doesn't oblige us to make martyrs of ourselves. Peter, we'll go away. We'll sell this monument of a house and have a real home; we'll take a little cottage somewhere where we can live all to ourselves, and you shall have your fishing and shooting and the rest of things you barbarians love. Peter!" She gave a little excited, triumphant laugh. "Peter—say yes!"

For an instant the clouds vanished. A flush spread over his white face.

"By Jove, little woman, how splendid that would be! A little shooting-box on the moors somewhere for the summer, and in the winter—"

"We'd travel—quite quietly, incognito. Nobody should know about the horrid money. We'd give grand tips so that everybody'd think we were hard up. We wouldn't make any friends, and there'd be nobody to bother us for loans and subscriptions. Peter—"

They broke away from one another as though a secret spring had shot them in different directions. The door had opened, and a discreet voice said:

"If you please, sir, the room is full."

This cryptic utterance seemed to have a dire effect. Peter straightened his disarranged tie. The momentary gayety died down, and the atmosphere returned to its normal state of listlessness.

"Eh—yes, of course. I had almost forgotten. How many this morning?"

"Thirty-four, sir, all by appointment except one gentleman who wouldn't give his name. He said he didn't want anything, so I let him in first. Perhaps if you could come now, sir? They're getting impatient."

From the adjoining room there came a low murmur of voices. "They're all in there," said Peter in a husky whisper, "thirty-four of them."

Middleton went slowly toward the door. He had the broken, resigned air of a man mastered by fate. Mrs. Middleton stood in the middle of the hearthrug, her head thrown back, her eyes flashing defiance.

"Peter!"

He looked back over his shoulder.

"It's no good, dear. We've just got to see it through. Just think, thirty-four of them! My duty as steward—"

"Peter, I wont allow it. I will not be slave-driven like this. I was born a free American citizen; I—"

The secretary ventured to interrupt.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Middleton—Lady Digly is downstairs and says she would be glad if you could spare her a few minutes. It's about the bazaar in aid of the Society for the Relief of Destitute Spinsters. She says—"

"Thank you, Harrison," said Mrs. Middleon meekly. "I will be down at once."

She stood there like a pretty yacht whose sails have been suddenly left windless. There were tears in her eyes. The cambric handkerchief lay crumpled to a ball in the palm of her clenched hand. Peter looked at her, and she avoided his eye.

"You see!" he said funereally as he went out. And for the first time in their matrimonial life he got no answer.

PETER MIDDLETON'S private sitting-room bore very little resemblance to the rest of the house. It was neither rococo nor Louis XV nor old English nor anything else recognizable. It was merely plain, almost barren-looking, as though its owner had attempted a desperate flight from the refinements of wealthy and cultured civilization. There was nothing of value, not so much as a possible Rembrandt over the mantelpiece. Instead there were one or two varsity trophies on the walls, and a photograph which commemorated the contemporary existence of five beflanneled young men obviously conscious that the incident was epoch-making.

Before this solitary work of art Peter's unknown visitor had taken up his stand. He was short, slight, elastic-looking, of uncertain age. His face was small and bronzed; and to say that it was adorned by a short, sandy-colored beard is to put the matter in the most favorable light. A pair of spectacles and a heavy overhanging brow did their best to conceal the brightness of two very alert gray eyes, and a frock coat belonging to a past generation of frock coats completed the picture. Hands clasped behind his back, his legs rather wide apart, he was contemplating the relic of past days when the door opened. Immediately he swung round, and the pair of spectacles, temporarily shifted up onto his forehead, resumed their normal attitude on the bridge of the short nose with an almost audible bump.

"Middleton—my dear fellow!"

"Gregory, by all that's wonderful!"

Peter came across the room with a new delighted impulsiveness and then stopped short. His visitor had returned his outstretched hand to its former position behind his back.

"Excuse me," he said, "but you are Peter Middleton, aren't you?"

"Of course. What on earth—"

"Oh, nothing—but I've just been looking at that old photo of you, and you've changed somewhat. A trifle like an underdone roly-poly if I may say so without undue flattery."

"Oh, by all means—"

Middleton gave a jerky laugh and glanced surreptitiously at the looking-glass. Between the features of the lean-faced boy with his clean limbs and vigorous carriage, and the reflection there was a difference that Middleton had not noticed—or had not cared to notice before. It was painful. He saw that he had grown heavier; the eyes were lackluster, his complexion pasty, unhealthy—not unlike the indigestible that Gregory had suggested.

"I'm out of sorts—run down," he said, and then with an effort to regain his old cheerfulness: "But it's good to see you, old fellow. Where have you sprung from?"

"Central Africa. Investigating sleeping-sickness. Those confounded Germans were right about it. Most disappointing! Arrived this morning and looked you up at the club. When I found your new address, I thought you had taken a job as flunky or something. Find you in possession. Made your pile, eh?"

"I'm married," said Peter with his hands in his pockets and his eyes on the fire.

"Oh, so you are—somebody's husband?"

"Yes,"—he tried to smile,—"I'm Mrs. Middleton's husband."

"A first-class job, I take it."

PETER made no answer. The eyes were still steady, but there was a little blue gleam in them that might mean trouble. Gregory adjusted the tips of his long fingers together and stared up at the ceiling.

"Gorgon, I suppose!"

Peter's hands flew out of his pockets. They were clenched, and the gleam had become a flame of wrath which transformed him.

"My wife is an angel—I adore her. If you think it was the confounded money—"

"I don't now. Your complexion misled me. I apologize."

Peter accepted the abruptly extended hand.

"Sorry—I'm all on edge. And now I come to think of it, you may be right. It is the money. Gregory, it's a curse."

"That's what all millionaires say—but they cling on to it tight enough."

"Perhaps it clings to them." Peter smiled grimly. "It's like an old man of the sea. Two months ago I helped a poor fellow out of a bad hole—two thousand pounds, it cost me; and the next day I had made five thousand pounds in copper. And I'm a fool at it, mind you. Every wild-cat scheme I touch goes up like a rocket. I'm getting richer and richer—"

"And more like the unbaked doughnut."

"My dear Gregory, a joke, however original, ceases to be funny after the second repetition."

Gregory ignored the protest. He drew out a stethoscope from the tail of his frock coat and slammed down the open window.

"Kindly undo your waistcoat."

"Are you mad?"

"Tolerably sane. I'd like to hear what your heart's up to. When a man of your age goes to pieces as you've done, he gets interesting."

Peter growled and then yielded. There seemed indeed little use in protesting. The Doctor's manner suggested violence if thwarted. Moreover Peter was feeling curiously weary and disinclined for argument. The examination lasted a quarter of an hour. Then Dr. Gregory sat back.

"Polo?" he asked laconically.

"No."

"Shooting—hunting—golf?"

Peter laughed mirthlessly.

"Good Lord, no."

"Profession? What about your career?"

"Aint got none. Who cares for a millionaire barrister? Why, he's an obvious fraud."

"Then what on earth do you do with yourself?"

Peter held up a warning finger.

"Listen!" he commanded.

For a moment nothing was audible. Then from the adjoining room there came a low murmur of voices, muffled but persistent. Gregory looked up inquiringly.

"They're all in there," said Peter in a husky whisper, "thirty-four of them."

"Thirty-four what? Maniacs?"

"Come and look."

He tiptoed across the room, Gregory at his heels, and softly opened a door hidden behind a curtain. "Look!" he commanded. Gregory obeyed with the air of a man requested to examine a new muscle. He inserted a suspicious eye to the crack and then drew back.

"Great bacilli diphtheritis!" he muttered. "What on earth are they?"

Peter shrugged his shoulders. His face was haggard and desperate.

"Deserving cases," he said hoarsely. "Thirty-four of them—all deserving, mark you—at least they say so! Some of them terrify me. That wizened little fellow in the green-black suit is a missionary in the South Seas, and every time he comes, he has a fresh horror about some fellow who got roasted alive—on the principle that the bigger the horror the bigger the check. The large lady next him wants one hundred pounds for sending out trousers to the aborigines. She says trousers are the first step toward Christian morality. Are they? How do I know? Never thought about it. My secretary doesn't know either. He weeds out the undeserving, and he's had two breakdowns, poor fellow!"

"And now you're going to have one."

"I dare say. Sometimes I feel like it."

"Does this happen every day?"

"Thirty-four is the lowest."

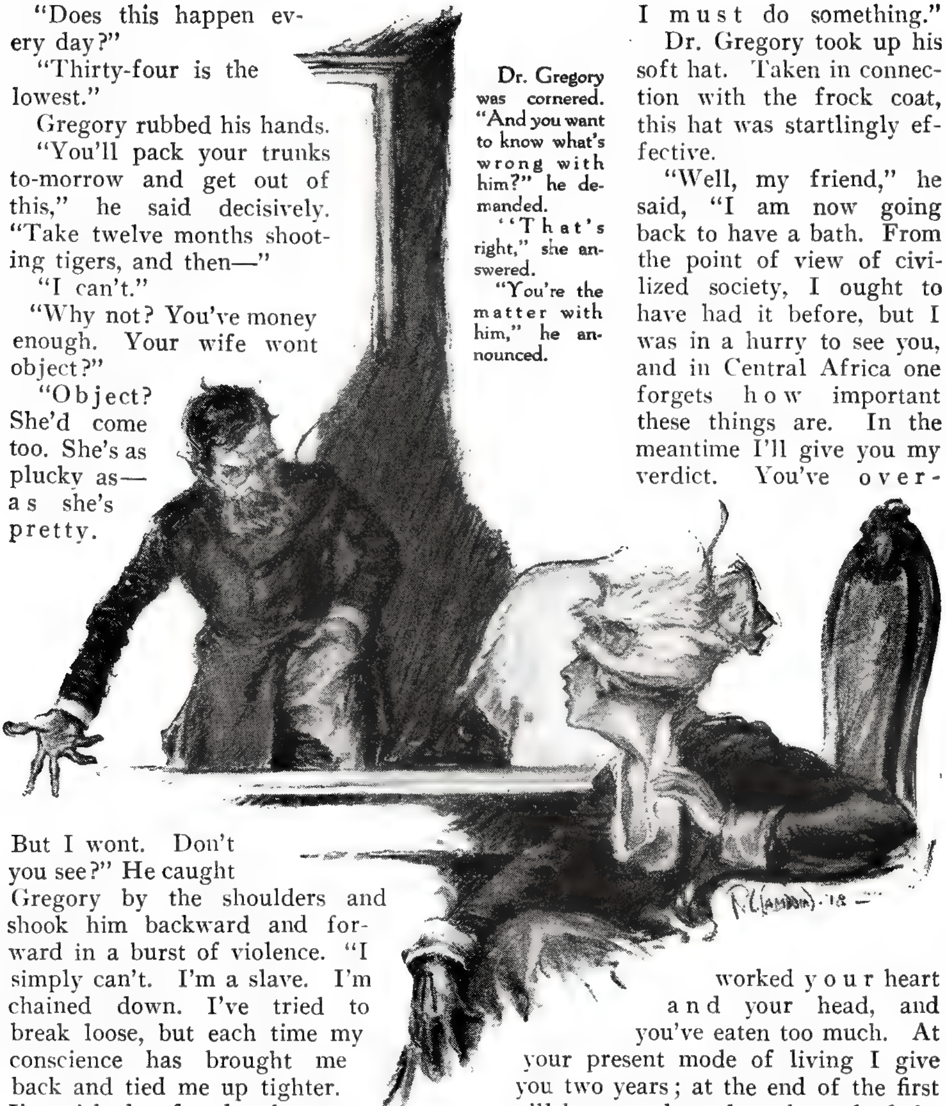
Gregory rubbed his hands.

"You'll pack your trunks to-morrow and get out of this," he said decisively. "Take twelve months shooting tigers, and then—"

"I can't."

"Why not? You've money enough. Your wife wont object?"

"Object? She'd come too. She's as plucky as—as she's pretty. But I wont. Don't you see?" He caught Gregory by the shoulders and shook him backward and forward in a burst of violence. "I simply can't. I'm a slave. I'm chained down. I've tried to break loose, but each time my conscience has brought me back and tied me up tighter. I'm rich by fraud — by a chance that I never deserved. There are a hundred thousand fellows wiser, better, cleverer than I, and they're slaving while I sit here and—and eat my head off. I tell you, the only excuse for my existence is my ability to help these fellows, and I must—not just by delegating my authority to paid philanthropists, but by finding them myself."



Dr. Gregory was cornered. "And you want to know what's wrong with him?" he demanded.

"That's right," she answered.

"You're the matter with him," he announced.

"Do you think you'll find them there?" demanded the Doctor with a scornful finger pointed at the door.

"I don't know. It's my only chance. I must do something."

Dr. Gregory took up his soft hat. Taken in connection with the frock coat, this hat was startlingly effective.

"Well, my friend," he said, "I am now going back to have a bath. From the point of view of civilized society, I ought to have had it before, but I was in a hurry to see you, and in Central Africa one forgets how important these things are. In the meantime I'll give you my verdict. You've overworked your heart and your head, and you've eaten too much. At your present mode of living I give you two years; at the end of the first you'll be a crock, and at the end of the second you'll be a corpse. So now you know."

Peter stared at him, aghast but not incredulous.

"Gregory, I used to be as sound as a bell."

"You used to live a reasonable life."

Peter's chin squared into hard lines. "I can't help it," he said. "It wont alter things."

"Of course not. You always were as obstinate as a mule. I shall speak to Mrs. Middleton—"

"I forbid you!"

Gregory considered the set, resolute face and shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, certainly. It's not my funeral. Good morning."

"Gregory, old fellow, don't be angry. I can't help myself. I'll do anything else. Wont anything else help me?"

"Bankruptcy!" was the blunt reply.

They said no more. Peter with an irresolute glance at the door, from whence came sounds of voluble impatience, followed his friend downstairs.

They shook hands gravely.

"You're a fool," said the older man.

"I know it. I was born so. See you later?"

"It depends where you're going," Gregory snarled back at him and slammed the front door.

ON his way upstairs Peter encountered his wife. She came out of the drawing-room, her face flushed, her eyes bright.

"Peter, who was that funny little man?" she asked.

"Dr. Gregory, an old friend," he answered. He looked at her with a sudden poignant thrill of emotion. The verdict had left him cold—until now. The idea of becoming a "crock," eventually a corpse, had not seemed particularly appalling or even new. Now he realized. He was going to leave it all, just because he couldn't adjust his health or his conscience to a state foreign to his birth. He was going to leave her; and she was so pretty, so young—only twenty-two, three years younger than he. And they had been immensely happy, immensely in love.

"Susan!" he exclaimed. He held out his arms, and she flew into them. They clung to each other like two children conscious of a certain cloud of unreasoning terror. When she looked up, her face was wet with tears.

"Peter, what is it? How you frighten me! A doctor? Are you ill? Did he examine you?"

"Y-e-s," he stammered, startled into the truth.

"What did he say? Oh, Peter—"

The white terror in her face steadied him. He brushed the disordered hair from her eyes.

"He said—he said it was nothing at all, Susan."

"Peter—how you frightened me!" She drew a deep sigh of quivering relief, but her eyes never left his face. "Peter, you're telling me the truth?"

"My dear, how can you ask such a thing!"

She grew suddenly quite calm and cheerful.

"Of course not. How could there be anything the matter with such a large and ponderous piece of humanity? Give me your arm. I want to tell you, that wretched woman has made me take a crochet stall and—"

Gently but resolutely he disengaged himself.

"Another time, sweetheart. I've got those people, you know. They're waiting."

"Oh, and I'm out to lunch."

"Bad luck! Well, to-night?"

"There'll be the butler."

He sighed.

"I can't help it," he repeated listlessly. "There are thirty-four of them."

He went on upstairs with heavy feet, and she stood and watched him. Her head was a little on one side, and she was frowning. When he had disappeared, she went into the library and raked out a medical directory.

"I'M Mrs. Middleton," she said.

From behind a barricade of disordered furniture, still draped in dusty linen sheets, Dr. Gregory examined his visitor with the irascibility of a man who finds his best-laid plans thwarted.

"Very interesting! From which statement I may no doubt presume that Mr. Middleton is your husband?"

"Sure, you've struck it right off, Doctor. And I've just come for five minutes of your valuable time."

"Ah—eh—matter of personal pleasure, or professionally?"

"For what are you at home, Doctor?"

"For neither," he rasped, his irritable fingers playing with the rim of his spectacles. "I arrived from Central Africa yesterday morning, and I told my man to admit no one."

Mrs. Middleton laughed musically.

"I reckon neither of you know how to manage a woman," she said. "Your young fellow downstairs had a lot to say, but I just smiled at him and came right up."

"So I see. Thomas is a fool."

"Do you really think so?'

Dr. Gregory, lowering at her out of the corners of his small irate eyes, merely grunted. Without invitation she had placed herself in his best chair—the only one available—and with her head thrown back against the black oak carving, was smiling upon him with unruffled sweetness. Accustomed to the visions of more or less adorned females of another clime and another color, the Doctor was vaguely impressed.

"As you're here, I suppose I'd better make a fee out of you," he consented grimly. "It would be unnecessary to ask you to sit down. Now, what's the matter with you? Nerves?"

"Do I look 'nervy'?"

Dr. Gregory snorted. "None of them do," he said. "They're all as flourishing as you are, but they're all dreadfully ill just the same. I set them to scrub floors. That's why I'm not in Harley Street."

"Well, right away it's not nerves. It's my husband."

He sat up, literally and figuratively. "Your—"

"I said 'husband.' What's the matter with him?"

Dr. Gregory was now not only mollified but alarmed. He threw a wistful, uncertain glance at the door.

"My good lady, how should I know?" he stammered.

"You examined him yesterday."

"Well, suppose I did—".

"And you gave him some bad news."

"How do you know?"

Mrs. Middleton smiled subtly. "He told me that you had said there was nothing the matter with him."

"Well?"

"Well, I guess you'd be the first doctor I've met on either side of the pond that hasn't scented out one fatal malady in a patient. When Peter said *that,* I knew he was just lying. So I hunted you up in the directory and came right round."

Dr. Gregory thrust his hands into his pockets. He was cornered, and his eyes sparkled with malice and anger.

"You're the matter with him," he announced.

Mrs. Middleton stiffened in her chair. "You mean," she said slowly, "I have made him ill—done him harm?"

"Yes." He faced her defiantly and then looked hastily in another direction. Mrs. Middleton had grown very pale.

"How?" she asked, scarcely above her breath.

"He married the wrong woman," he said brutally. Then he collapsed onto a stool behind his table. He was angry with himself, and that was a feeling he could least of all tolerate. Why had the woman come to worry him?

"I guess I don't understand," she said falteringly. "I tried to make Peter happy. I knew Englishwomen are different, and I tried to be like them. Say, you wouldn't ever guess that I was an American, would you?"

HE cast a pain-stricken glance at her. She was looking at him with a pathetic pleading which terrified him.

"I—really, perhaps some of your expressions—"

"I know. They just break out—like measles. But I've done my best, and I thought Peter was—was satisfied. But now you say I've done him harm."

"Indirectly—indirectly," interrupted the Doctor, rapping the table with his knuckles. "You misunderstand me, no doubt. You are everything that's charming. Peter seemed—devoted. It's not that; it — it's the confounded money."

Mrs. Middleton raised a pair of beautiful eyebrows in sad bewilderment. "Money?" she echoed.

"Yes, your money." He got up, his old indignation aflame. "You probably wont understand. You are too American. But I knew Peter three years ago, and I saw him yesterday. And I say: 'Damn your money!' "

"Doctor!"

"Apologize! Forgot myself. But I'm put out. I knew Peter at Oxford; he was the best runner and rower that we had. He was as clean-limbed as—as a

Mrs. Middleton gave a little excited, triumphant laugh. "We'd travel—quite quietly, incognito Nobody should know about the horrid money. Peter—" They broke away from one another as though a secret spring had shot them in different directions. The door had opened.

stag, and as tough as a rhinoceros. When he came up, he hadn't a sou—and when he had, it was his own hard-earned money. There wasn't a finer, better fellow on earth, or one with a finer future. And now what is he? He's just your husband—Mrs. Middleton's husband—without a job except that of doling out your infernal—apologize!—money and seeing that you're not cheated more than he can help. He's an overworked automatic cash-machine with an infernal memory of a time when he was a man, ambitious, healthy—"

He stopped and sank into his chair again, his hands in his pockets, his chin on his chest, his short legs stretched out in eloquent despair. The dreaded catastrophe had broken over him. Mrs. Middleton was crying.

"Go on," she said, while two very large tears trembled on her downcast lashes. "I'm beginning to understand and—and I'd rather know everything."

"There's not much more to tell," he said gruffly. "He's developed a conscience, which no healthy man ought to have, and a heart-trouble which will finish him in two years unless—"

"Doctor, anything that money can do—"

He bounded up.

"Everything that money can do will kill him. What he wants is to be thrown out neck and crop, to have to fend for himself and become a healthy, self-respecting man again. Can you do that?"

"I can't—divorce him."

"Of course not."

"I can't put him on an allowance." She was speaking half to herself, and he snorted, bitterly triumphant.

"You can't do anything. Peter ought to have married a woman whom he had to support and protect. Your money is just dry rot for him. You'd better tell that to your people over there. It may clear their ideas as to the value of the almighty dollar."

She got up. The tears had dried, and her eyes were very bright.

"I guess you don't love me much, Doctor?"

"You've spoiled my friend," he retorted in defiance.

"I understand. But if—if I send Peter to you in a year's time strong and happy, will you shake hands?"

"I'll shake hands and I'll apologize," he conceded curtly.

"*Au revoir,* then—and thank you."

Discreetly she had laid two gold-pieces on the cover of the table. He pushed it roughly toward her.

"I don't want—"

"Dry rot? Oh, Doctor, I'm sure you're quite healthy enough to run the risk." There was a flash of gay malice in her eyes as she turned to him from the door. "And there is always Harley Street to be remembered."

He bowed with exaggerated courtesy.

"Good morning, Mrs. Middleton."

"Good morning, Doctor."

She was gone. He rang the bell furiously.

"Butterfly!" he muttered in savage condemnation. But it had struck him that the consulting-room was unbearably dark and dingy.

THE last of the deserving had taken their departure. There had been thirty of them, and not one had stated his case in under ten minutes. Consequently Peter sat at the table, listless yet conscious of an uneasily throbbing pulse, and stared stupidly at his secretary, who was sorting out the evening mail.

The secretary glanced at him. "It's half-past seven, sir," he said discreetly.

Middleton started.

"Eh, yes—of course. I must go and dress. That'll do, Phillips. I don't want you again to-night."

But when the secretary had taken his quiet departure, Middleton still did not move. He was not conscious of any particular train of thought, and yet his subconscious self was looking into the immediate future with the shrinking revolt of utter weariness. The long dinner for which he had no appetite, the voiceless yet persistent attention of those liveried mutes, even the vision of his wife in her full evening splendor, floated before his mind's eye and nauseated him. He was weary of everything—his very affections seemed to have become numb and lifeless. Susan and he had quarreled four times in the last four days. Was it his fault or hers?

The door opened, and she stood before him. It was as though his mental picture of her had suddenly taken corporeal form. She was already dressed for dinner—a svelte figure in gold brocade, and her fair hair beneath the electric light was like a burnished copper crown set above a face as beautiful—and as hard.

"It's time to dress, Peter," she said coldly.

He got up at once and began arranging his papers in dazed haste.

"Yes, I know. I'm dog tired. I wont be long."

She came slowly across the room, and he realized that she held a letter in her hand. She threw it carelessly on the table.

"I've had a note from the Rivers," she said. "They have asked us both to motor down with them to Ranleigh tomorrow. I have just telephoned our acceptance."

"Our acceptance?" He echoed her faint emphasis on the pronoun. "In the first place, you know I dislike the Rivers. I do not consider them fit company for my wife. I have given you my reasons—"

"They are my friends," she interrupted sharply, "and I have accepted."

He drew himself up, and their eyes met. Something in her voice and manner seemed to rasp along his raw nerves. His pulses began to beat faster.

"It is impossible that I should accompany you, Susan."

"Why?"

"In the first place, it would be flying in the face of my own opinion."

She laughed defiantly.

"How righteous, Peter! You dislike the Rivers because they are parvenus. Pray, what am I but a parvenu! And you are my husband who spends Papa's ill-gotten gains."

"Susan!"

She flinched before the sudden blaze in his eyes. Then she held her head higher.

"Isn't it true?"

He turned away and walked unsteadily toward the mantelpiece. A half-forgotten adage of his gentle Puritan mother signaled to him from his childhood: "Count twenty before you answer in anger." In his blind distress it seemed to lay a steadying hand on him. He answered quietly but with averted face.

"Obviously it is true. My dislike for the Rivers is based on other grounds, as you know; but since you like them, I have no more to say. But I cannot accompany you. You must go alone."

"I always go alone." Her voice shook, he thought, with resentment. "People are beginning to talk. Does it never occur to you in what position your neglect places me?"

"Neglect?" He swung around. "How can you talk of neglect? But I have my work—"

"Which consists of throwing my money away to other people—"

A STIFLED exclamation broke from his lips. She was looking at him with an exasperating scornful amusement in her gray eyes. Still he clung to the last shreds of his self-restraint.

"I give away the money you—you allotted to me—"

"Your common sense must tell you that it is my money, all the same."

She had turned away, and he could not see her face. With a last effort he mastered himself. Even in that moment of goaded pride and long-stifled bitterness something of the old tenderness crept into his voice.

"Susan—little Susan, little wife, what has happened? A few days ago we were so happy. There was not a cloud between us. And now—dear, can't you understand? Just because it is not my money, I must do something to ease my sense of the—the unfairness of it all. I thought by spending my life—"

"I do not choose that my money should be squandered in trying to bring about the millennium."

"Then—"

"And I expect you to accompany me when I wish you to do so."

"You mean I am not much more than —than a bought lapdog!"

She laughed unsteadily.

"Susan—take care—" he stammered. "You are riding for a fall. I am not an American myself to be browbeaten even by you."

"Peter, it is for you to take care now! One doesn't root out one's nationality, and I'm an American still—"

"I know it. You are more American than—than my wife." He strode to the door and then turned. "You can choose," he said hoarsely. He could not see that her face was more ashen than his own. He only saw the erect defiant figure which seemed to embody all the harshness of her words and voice. With a sudden flash of memory he added: "Be careful—there is a 'too late' in life."

She steadied. "I shall go my own way until you have earned the right to ask me to go yours."

"You despise me for living—as I do?"

She faced him with a deep-drawn breath. "Yes."

They eyed each other in blank silence. Peter's hands relaxed.

"You are right," he said simply. "I am despicable. I see it now. I let my love get the better of my self-respect—and that's always fatal. Very well! I am going. You will find everything—your money—in perfect order. You can make what excuses you like—to everybody. Say I am ill. That will keep them quiet. And after a time they will forget to ask. At any rate I sha'n't come back until I have put things right—until I have earned you and won my place in the world—and in your life. Good-by."

He looked at her for the last time as though trying to imprint something on his memory. She did not move. She stood like a statue under the shaded light, rigid, indifferent. He went out. She heard the door close and his steady step along the corridor. Then one white, jeweled hand stole out and gripped the edge of the table. Her eyes had closed, and her underlip was kept tight between the small teeth.

"I am an American citizen," she whispered brokenly. "I am an American citizen. I wont—I wont cry."

The hall door slammed. The sound seemed to thrill through her like a current of electricity. She ran swiftly to the window and drew aside the heavy curtains and peered out into the foggy darkness. Down below, a familiar figure passed through the circle of yellow lamplight, hesitated—looked up.

"Peter—Peter—oh, my Peter!"

But it was only a choking whisper which scarcely carried across the great silent room. The familiar figure passed on slowly into the darkness.

"Oh, Peter, if you only knew!"

The "American citizen" in all her splendor dropped on her knees. With her face buried in her white arms, she cried her heart out.

("The Romantic Lodger," the second delightful story in these "Adventures of Mrs. Middleton's Husband," will appear in the next, the September, issue of the Green Book Magazine.)

The Gold Hairpin

By

Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

ILLUSTRATED BY R. F. JAMES

BABA Lonnye reached Washington at sunrise in her long, white-bodied roadster. She had been speeding all night. She had no goal. She did not care where she was going. Why should she care?

The national capital is a lovely place to skid into at sunrise: all the feathery green trees and shrubbery, the flowery parks and wide, clear circles and avenues are so verdant in the morning. Like a beauty yawning awake, stretching verdant arms and blinking feathery lashes, easing light limbs by lolling a little while before the pleasure of the day, is Washington at dawn.

Baba let her long hands relax on the steering-wheel. Alone yet not lonely,—glad, rather, that no one in all the world cared or dared to be with her,—she took the shimmering stretch out an avenue, by palatial white-marble homes, shoals and shoals of them, to the wider, freer spaces beyond the city. A road-sign told her that she was on a pike—an endless way unwinding like a silver ribbon under her silver-rimmed wheels! Here the mansions of the rich gave place to the homes of the supposedly happy—nice, modest dwellings, with war-gardens, small garages, chickens and perhaps children. Farther along were fewer houses—fields, barns, fences, the hills. Baba loved the hills, partly because they were so far off that they could not touch her—how she delicately hated anything that touched her! A beautiful woman is apt to be that way when about forty thieves have stolen her heart. Oh, it had been easy to steal once! Now it was steeled against all things—except, perhaps, dawn, darkness, dusk and dim desires. Still in her twenties, Baba had the poise of sixty with the face of sixteen. She would not age for a great many years, but with each year her eyes would grow deeper and more dangerously wistful; she was able, when she wished, to throw out a spell of wistfulness, a sort of vaporous longing like a white mist rising from the surface of a stone.

SHE came to a little town in the hills where the pike took on the dignity of a main street. A crooked, quaint village, with houses old enough for real romance and bypaths young enough for real love. Real love! She twiddled her fingers on her steering-wheel. In this little town, on these little bypaths, through all the seasons of the year, simple lovers might come quite close to finding it. Sighting a wayside garage on a horseshoe of ground in the body of the village, she ran her roadster around the horseshoe, stopped before the wide barred doors of the garage and sounded her horn for gasoline.

It was still early enough for most of the town to be asleep, though here and there a housewife was sweeping a porch, and there and here a man was at work. At the sound of her horn the doors of the garage were parted. A young man in leather overalls came out.

Baba, from the thieves who had stolen her heart, had learned forty kinds of thievery, and had learned the sad truth that a steeled heart is amazingly soft to temptation. The young man who came out of the door of the wayside garage was good-looking enough to be dubbed a young god of the morning. The time and the place caught her fancy. She took her long hands from the wheel.

"I'm stalled for gas," she said with

her smile of sixteen. "And there's a groaning in my engine. Can you help?"

"I sholy can." He had Maryland's own drawl and slur. His hair was shot with gold in the early sunshine, and his skin was clear red. He rolled back the doors of the garage. "Will yo'-all drive in?" he queried.

She drove in. There were only a couple of mud-spattered empty cars, a kit of tools, a rusty stove, a gas-pump and some tires in the wayside garage. Yet somehow it pleased her. She realized she was tired of the "N. Y." tag on the tail of her roadster. "N. Y." stood for such different sort of mud, tools, pumps and tires! She watched the young garage-god supply the gasoline and examine the engine.

"What's the name of the town?" she inquired.

He looked surprised. "Don't yo' know?"

"I hope it's a likable name," she said. "I put my trust in names."

"This is Edenville," he told her, straightening from the engine to look curiously at her.

"Really, Edenville? Oh, I like Eden—though I've never lived in it. Tell me,"—she opened the white door of her roadster,—"could I live here for a little while?" She put her long, costly shod foot on the step.

The garage-god grew red. "Ma'am?" he said ingenuously.

She laughed, young as he. "I mean here for a while. Where do you live? In Edenville, of course, but where? With your mother, I guess. Would she take me to board?" She laughed quite merrily. "I've most of my worldly goods in the little black trunk you see in the back of my car. In reality, I'm a sort of hobo: the lure of the road keeps me roofless. But I give you my word, I'd like to tarry awhile in Edenville. May I?" She jumped down from her roadster. In the wayside garage she was a rare oddity: tall, long-limbed, with a young, brilliant face, and a look of the world about her. She pulled off her gloves and then her round, close-fitting hat. Her hair vivified her, sheened clusters of curls at each side of her face and a smooth, sheened sweep from her forehead.

The young man in leather overalls stooped and picked up a gold hairpin. "Yo'-all dropped this," he said courteously.

"I don't think so," she laughed, hands at her hair. And gayly: "How do you know it's mine?"

"The girls round hyar don't wear gold hairpins," he said.

"I don't want it." She refused the hairpin. "Throw it away."

"It's too pretty to throw away," he answered, examining the bit of gold wire. And half awkwardy, half gracefully, he found a nail on the wall of the garage and hung the hairpin up.

"It's not worth a hang," she protested.

"I reckon it is," he laughed. And he looked at her from his godlike height, looked wonderingly. "If yo'-all ever come back this way," he added, "it'll be on the nail, waiting for yo'."

"I seldom come back," she said, half sighing. She went to the door of the garage and looked out at Edenville. It was waking up to its likable routine: one or two machines and a trolley-car were coming along the pike; the little stores were opening; soon the wives would be kissing the husbands at the doors, and the children would be going to school.

"Yes, I shall stay here awhile," said Baba over the curve of her shoulder. "Will you house my car? And who will house me? Truly, I'd like to stop with your mother. My name is Baba Lonnye. I come from New York, which really stands for 'nowhere,' with its merchandise of gold and silver, of pearls, of fine linen, of silk and scarlet. I write. I hope you haven't read any of my novels. I go about seeking whom I may devour with my pen. When I fancy a place, I tarry long enough to immortalize it. If you'll let me stay in Edenville, I'll write you a wonderful love-novel." She was wistful, glancing over her shoulder like a young vagrant, unsure, in spite of youth and beauty, that any welcome would be offered her.

But her listener disarmed her vaporous timidity by true friendliness of man-

"Wont you do a roofless girl a favor, Mrs. Heed? Wont you take her into your Edenville home for a while?"

ner. "I sho am glad that yo' like the town," he told her. "My name is Jason Heed. My mother was one of the Berites, before she married. I live up yonder." He was at the door, pointing toward a guttered street that ran in a zigzag up from the pike. "I own the garage, and I'll sholy house yo'-all's car. There's board at the Riddings', down the street a piece. I'll take yo' there, if yo' sholy want to go." He was red again, looking at her in clumsy pleasure as he stood beside her in the doorway of the garage.

Her eyes were on the guttered street that zigzagged up from the pike. "I could never write at the Riddings'," said Baba. "I want to be up yonder." She put on her hat. "You may take me there," she announced. "I have a feeling that unless I can stop with your mother, I sha'n't care for Eden." She went through the door, out to the sunshine, looking back at Jason Heed with the hint of pathos that made her seem so young.

HE caught up with her before she had left the horseshoe of ground and reached the guttered street. "Yo' sho are taking a risk, asking a Berite to take a boarder!" he laughed. "Yo' don't know my mother. The Berites are one of the best families round hyar. They're miles above the Heeds. But the Heeds can knock the stuffing out of a Berite any day in the week. Four Berites have been rejected for the war." He took long steps, unconsciously filling out his big chest with the sweet air.

Baba found him so good to look at that she played on him one of the tricks of the fortieth thief who had riddled her heart; she let her glance linger and drift away. "Tell me more about the Heeds," she suggested. "Are they all so big?"

"Yes," he said, pleased that she liked him, and curious of the lingering, drifting glance. "There are twelve Heeds in the service," he told her proudly. "I'm in this draft, myself. I sholy am keen to go. But I'm hectored up about what's coming to my mother. I've always taken care of her."

"Have you?" said Baba. "Happy mother!" She looked along the uphill, guttered street, and at the houses on each side—a big brown house with broad porches, a little red house with an outside chimney, and a service-star in the window, a tumble-down, colorless house, and a huge, clay-colored house with twelve service-stars on a banner at the door. She knew at once where he lived, and the house took her fancy. "Twelve stars!" she ejaculated. "All sons of your mother?"

"All Heeds," Jason replied stoutly. "My cousins and brothers. I'm the last to go. How did yo'-all know our house?"

"By the stars," she said. She came to his gate and opened it. "Is that your mother at the door?" she questioned. "Oh, I like your mother! She's like a bit of fine china." Baba went quickly up a path guarded by box hedges, to the house with twelve service-stars.

AT the bottom of the steps she stopped and looked up at Jason Heed's mother with wistfulness accentuated by a sudden twisting together of her long, ringless hands. Then she smiled, in a way that made her charming and took the look of the world from her. "I'm Baba Lonnye, from New York," she said. "Wont you do a roofless girl a favor, Mrs. Heed? Wont you take her into your Edenville home for a while? I write. I know you haven't read any of my novels. If you'll let me stay with you, I'll write a wonderful story. Please do!" She mounted the steps and stood on the porch, looking whole volumes of longing at the fragile, pretty lady in the silk-mesh lavender shawl, who, before her marriage, had been Naomi Berite.

Jason Heed, coming up the steps, said in a blurt: "Mother, this is luck. Miss Lonnye will be company for yo' when I'm gone." Reaching his mother, he put his arm about her. "Sholy this is luck!" he laughed. "Company for yo'-all."

Mrs. Heed looked up at Jason with eyes the color of cornflowers, the aristocratic, futile Berite eyes. Then the eyes rested on Baba Lonnye. "I'm sorry," murmured Mrs. Heed.

Baba was unexpectedly disconcerted by the murmur, and rendered for the second nothing more than a paling young woman. She seemed on the point of turning away, of running back to the garage for her white-bodied roadster.

Precipitantly, Jason stepped from his mother to Baba. "Wait. Yo' don't know my mother," he protested, reddening. "She'll not be able to deny yo'. Ask her again—the way yo'-all asked me." He smiled at Baba to give her courage.

Baba laughed. In a flash she was full of thievery, full of whimsy. "I could cast dust on my head and weep and wail," she mocked. She looked, with her young face brilliantly colored, at Mrs. Heed; and instantly she lost her insouciance and became humble. "What a foolish girl I am!" she said contritely. "How could you be expected to do me a favor, Mrs. Heed? You know only my name and my features. What do you know of my soul, my morals, my intentions? I give you my word, Mrs. Heed, they are blameless." Naïvely, she stretched out her hand. "Wont you let me write my story in your house in Eden?" she pleaded. "I fancy you so. Please." She was winsome, modest, almost trustworthy.

It was true that the Berites found it hard, in spite of blooded pride, to deny themselves to people. Known throughout Edenville for her graciousness and personal sweetness, and for the easily influenced sensibilities that had made her elope, years before, with rugged, moneyless John Heed, Naomi yielded to an impulse toward attracting the young stranger she seemed able to humble. With her very good manner, she gave Baba Lonnye her blue-veined, transparent hand. "It is nice of you to fancy me, Miss Lonnye. Wont you come in?" She led the way into the huge old-fashioned hall, where several portraits of the Berites looked down on the stout Heed furniture.

Baba, knowing she had won her point, gave Jason a sparkling side-glance. She followed Naomi Heed, and in the comfortable parlor seated herself beside Naomi and talked vivaciously of Edenville, and the story of Eden she had in her mind. She did not notice Jason any more. So the young garage-god went after her black trunk, in a state of awkward elation.

EDENVILLE had a spell of glorious weather after the coming of Baba Lonnye. The pike was a white delight under the ever-blue sky. Day after day Baba put off her story to drive up hill and down dale in her roadster. One day she passed an automobilist who abruptly halted his car at the sight of her. The automobilist was Chaff Berite, the wealthiest and most unfit Berite. He leaned forward over his wheel, cornflower-blue eyes full of recognition.

"Baba!" he called in a sweet voice.

The long, white-bodied roadster went on. Baba Lonnye looked over the curve of her shoulder. "Chaff!" laughed Baba. And her hands were almost idle on the wheel.

She did not increase her speed, but drove evenly; only her eyes showed what might be going on in her ravished heart—for Chaff Berite, as it happened, had been one of the forty thieves who had given her the poise of sixty with the face of sixteen. She had known him eons ago—he had been the first thief! Long ago she had lived in Washington, before the greater city had claimed her. She had known Chaff Berite in Washington, in the sunrise of her life. Had some vagary of romance brought her back? She came back so seldom. To meet him, after all these years, in the hills of Edenville, where he had been born, made her blanch over the demolition of her heart. Oh, the Heeds, any Heed, ranked miles above the Berites!

On the way home she passed Jason, tinkering on the pike with a blown-out touring-car, while the occupants, a gentleman and two young ladies, disported themselves on the horseshoe ground of the wayside garage. One of the young ladies was obviously enamored of the garage-god. She was twirling her chiffon veil and casting girlish remarks at Jason. Often it takes no more than a fresh face in a chiffon veil to make a

"Let us go home," she said. "Let us walk." With her hand in his, she had no look of the world upon her; she was Baba, of Edenville—really good.

beautiful woman despondent with dim desires. Baba did not speak to Jason. She drove up the guttered street, and called in a low voice to Naomi Heed:

"Oh, Mrs. Heed! Come out and take a drive with me. The day is blameless, divine."

Naomi called back that she would be glad to come. It had taken less than two weeks to subjugate her; she was Baba's gentle and pretty slave. Denied a daughter, she found in the charming girl an almost ideal companionship. In her lavender hat and dainty shawl she came out and allowed Baba to put her into the white-bodied roadster.

Baba took a new road with Naomi—a red clay road through a green pinewood, where the sun filtered in through the pines and made grotesque shadows, and the air was fragrant with balm. They talked of Naomi's life; of rugged John Heed, dead a dozen years, of Naomi's sons, and of the Berites. Naomi asked Baba about her life. The girl talked of Washington, New York, Paris, Naples—and New York. She spoke, in her young, brilliant way, of the abundance of that great city's delicacies, of her chariots and crafts and sorceries. She conversed with almost diabolical witchery. She utterly delighted Naomi.

The clay road led around, as roads do, to the familiar pike. And here the roadster ran level for a few moments with Chaff Berite's car. Chaff may or may not have been waiting for the roadster's reappearance. At any rate he was able to make sure that it was Baba Lonnye, and to chat for a brief space with his cousin Naomi Heed.

"So glad to see you looking well, Naomi," he said punctiliously. "How soon does Jason go? What do you hear from the boys?"

"Nothing but good news," answered Naomi. "Baba, have you met my cousin? Miss Lonnye—Mr. Berite."

BABA and Chaff acknowledged the introduction, one too brightly and the other too lightly. It is never quite an easy thing for the thief and the thieved from to be casual with one another. They exchanged a few superficial words while each took stock of the other. She saw that time was breaking him; he saw that time was making her. She pitied him; he envied her. She wondered, remembering, how many steeled hearts might be against him in the day of reckoning.

"So glad to have seen you, Naomi—and to have met you, Miss Lonnye," Chaff said in going on.

In unity and pleasant converse Baba and Naomi finished the drive. Jason had come home when they arrived. Supper was on the table. The evening lights were burning. At the table Baba sat by Jason's mother, helping her with the cream-jug and sugar-bowl. Baba knew, when she passed Jason the cream, or sweetened his coffee, that the heightened red of his face was for her. She knew that in the two weeks she had been in Edenville she had easily stolen Jason Heed's big young heart. It did not seem to touch her or shame her, her thievery. She had been taught to steal by shameless adepts. She had fancied his heart. Soon his little pain and her little fancy would give place to other things. After supper Baba went for a moonlight stroll with Jason, through the village where the houses were old enough for real romance and the bypaths young enough for real love.

Jason did not try to conceal his love for Baba. It was too big to conceal, in the moonlight. "I love yo'," he cried on a bypath. "I've cared, ever since the time I picked up yo'-all's hairpin."

"Which wasn't worth a hang," she teased him.

"I love and love yo'!" he cried loudly. "Baba, will yo' marry me?"

It almost touched her—and she delicately hated to be touched. "What a moon Eden has!" she sighed irrelevantly. "How many moons a year? Twelve. Two times twelve are twenty-four; three times are thirty-six; four times are forty-eight—eight over forty! How many moons one loves!" She turned her dangerously wistful eyes on Jason.

She had not lived in Eden before, and she was not prepared for Jason's big arms and bigger kisses. They touched her, caught her, threatened to restore her heart. She had heard, as everyone hears, of hearts being restored by such love as Jason's; but she had not believed it until Jason's lips had crushed the delicate hate from hers. Once the hate was gone, she was all Baba, the verdant, sunrise Baba, enriched by darkness and dim desires. In a flare that seemed to have neither height nor depth, in a song that seemed a psalm, a love for Jason was born. He appeared to her to be whom her soul loved—for her soul was in the flare and the song: his neck appeared to her like the tower of David built for an armory, whereon hung a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men. Jason's love was mighty. And in all the forty thieves there had not been a mighty one. A beautiful woman's heart it filched so easily, so often!

"I love you," she said to Jason, "—mightily, almightily."

Through the moonlight, along the by-paths, they came quite close to real love. She promised to marry him, as if she were still in her sunrise. In his sunrise he promised always to shield her and take care of her. At last they went home. Resplendent, Baba ran up the steps and called his mother.

Naomi was in the parlor, talking to Chaff Berite. Her futile, patrician face looked pinched. When she heard Baba calling, she looked helplessly at her blue-eyed cousin. "What shall I do?" she asked.

Chaff's response was typical of the Berites. He smiled a cousinly good night and slipped out through a French window.

Naomi, left alone, shivered in her silk shawl. When Baba ran in, full of life and love, Jason's mother grew pallid. She repulsed Baba when the girl, blind for perhaps the first time in her life, would have thrown her arms about her. She said the only thing she could think of: "I have been talking to Chaff."

It was enough. In an instant Baba was pitifully young, uncertain, unsure, stolen from. Her love for Jason, like Judas, went out and hanged itself in despair. Chaff Berite, the first thief, and Naomi, Jason's mother! Naomi's words told Baba enough.

Jason blundered in after Baba and caught his mother up in his arms. "I love her! I love Baba, mother! I sholy love her."

Naomi hid her pretty face on her son's chest. "Sh—sh!" she shivered. "Chaff has been here. Oh, Jason! My poor boy!"

BABA put her hands over her ears. That mighty look of wonder, of vital curiosity, on Jason's godlike features! With a straight, swift walk, Baba went to the door of the parlor, through the hall where the Berite portraits looked down on the Heed furniture, out to the steps and down the path guarded with box hedges. No one called her back. She went along the guttered street, to the pike, and over the horseshoe ground, to Jason's wayside garage. She knew where the key hung, and she opened the doors and got her roadster. She sped away in it, into the night. She had no goal. She did not care where she was going. Why should she care?

Edenville is a sad place to go through alone in the late moonlight, and the towns and the hills beyond are sadder, when alone. In her goal-less straight drive she marveled over a thief's meanness. Hadn't it been enough, to do what he had done? What spitefulness had prompted him to tattle? She did not wonder that the Berites had been rejected for war. They were unfit—unclean! Yet Naomi was sweet, and she had Berite blood in her. So had Jason. And he was mighty. It was all a muddle! Heeds, Berites, Lonnyes and the rest. Why, oh, why had she loved Jason, even if only for an evening—why?

She drove all night. At sunrise she came back toward Edenville along the red clay road through the green pinewood. In the heart of the wood, in the dawn, she stopped her roadster and with a low cry stepped down from it to the deep carpet of pine-needles. Jason was lying face downward in the wood. He was asleep there. She knelt beside him and turned his face to the light. She saw that he had been crying, had cried himself to sleep in the pine-wood. She was mightily touched. She sat beside him on the bed of soft needles. She covered her face and wept. She felt as if her sins reached to heaven.

After a while Jason stirred and opened his eyes. He looked in sleepy blankness at the sky—then in blankness at Baba, sitting beside him. His face grew black, as if he had discovered a thief come upon him.

She wept again. "Jason, what did your mother tell you?" she lamented.

He did not answer but continued to regard her blackly.

SHE saw on his face what Chaff Berite must have seen in her face eons ago. Her weeping grew tumultuous—she threw herself on the bed of pine-needles and wept for all men and women. Her hair came down, and gold hairpins were scattered in the pine-needles.

Jason picked up a hairpin and looked at it. His face worked. He threw it away.

She saw him throw the hairpin away, and she sat up, tossing back her hair. "I believe," she said, "I hate you more than all the rest."

"More than all the rest!" He groaned and looked from her.

"What did your mother tell you?" she pleaded. She put out her ringless hand to him, then let it fall listlessly.

"Enough to make me beat up Chaff Berite," said Jason tersely.

"You—beat him last night?" she asked.

"To a pulp," said Jason. He looked curiously at her. "I love yo'."

"I loved you," she answered simply.

"Don't yo' love me any more?"

"No. It's over."

"Over, for yo'. Not for me. I love yo'!" he cried despairingly. He caught her hand and kissed it.

The mighty love that seemed the love of her soul was reborn in the sunrise. Of a sudden she grew to a new Baba, quite good. She drew her hand from him in a way that made it sacred—her ringless, long young hand. "I love you," she said purely.

She gathered up her hair and knotted it without hairpins. "What of your mother?" she asked. "Does she hate me?"

"No one could hate yo'," said Jason, "—least of all, my mother." He kissed her hand again, differently.

"When you're gone," said Baba, "when you're gone to war, I'll take care of your mother." Her face grew brighter. "At first she'll deny me; she'll detest me for having made you love me. But you're right, she'll never hate me. I'll win her, as if I'd been all she wanted me to be, all she wanted her daughter-in-law to be. I'll take care of her, Jason. I write. A wonderful story is in me. I'll stay with your mother in Eden. Some day, if you come back, my hairpins may be worth hanging up."

Then she lost her unwonted mood of everydayness, and grew brilliantly pensive. She said, picking up a handful of pine-needles and breathing their odors: "In holy history a daughter-in-law said to her husband's mother: 'Intreat me not to leave thee: naught but death part thee and me.' And the mother's name was the name of your mother—Naomi. I will be that way with your mother, Jason—while you are gone to make our country's holy history."

YOUNG face exalted, she lifted her eyes to the sky above the pine-trees, roseate with morning. "If only, always, I had lived in Eden, I might aspire to a bit of immortality myself," she sighed.

Jason marveled at the light and darkness of her. "Yo' *are* immortal," he said diffidently.

She shook her head, still looking up. "Naomi would change that to *immoral*. Yet what is immorality, and what is immortality—who knows?"

"We-all know," said Jason seriously.

Her eyes came down to him. "True. Oh, Jason, love keep me moral and immortal!"

He put out his hands and drew her to his side until they were kneeling together on the pine-needles. "Yo' voice my prayer to God," he told her.

"And you will love me in spite of what Chaff Berite told your mother, Jason?"

"Yes, Baba. But it's yo'-all can make or break my love. What do yo' want—a making or a breaking love?"

"Oh, a making love!" she cried fervently.

"Then stay in Edenville and keep yo' eyes from Chaff and his kind, till I come back from the war," said Jason grimly.

"I will," she vowed.

On his knees Jason gave her the mighty kiss of morning—slower and more binding than the moonlight kiss. Then gravely he drew her to her feet and with his big, clumsy hands, bound up her hair, which had fallen again. And he picked up the shower of gold hairpins, holding them in his big-knuckled fist.

She touched his fist with her fingers, "Throw them away," she said. "I shall wear others." She grew stormy, passionately unlocked his fist and threw the hairpins to the winds. "Gold!" she said with loathing. She turned and clung to him, with her face flung back. "For me, Jason, henceforth, with love's help, shall be only the gold of the sun and the gold of your soul."

"For me," said Jason, holding her quietly, "the gold of the sword and the gold of your soul."

"The sun, the sword, and two souls—what more could we ask?" she meditated. She drew from his arms and put her hand in his. "Let us go home," she said. "Let us walk."

"Yes," agreed Jason. He walked with her, along the red clay road, to the pike, by the wayside garage, up the guttered street, to his house with the twelve service-stars.

Baba Lonnye ascended the steps of Jason's home in the sunrise. With her hand in his, she had no look of the world upon her; she was Baba, of Edenville—really good.

If You Were in Her Place—

NAOMI was twenty-three, and Life had not yet put out its imperious hand to test her—unless you except the time when the minister's son, after his return from college, had suggested that she go to New York with him on a holiday, and Naomi had promptly planted a hard little fist in his face. But now to Naomi came a crisis in which a dawning romance and the mystery of her strange mother's periodic journeys to the city played a prominent part.

You'll wonder what you would do if you were in Naomi's place, for you'll be deeply interested in her; indeed, she is one of the most likable, real and yet individual heroines we've met in a long time. Don't fail to make her acquaintance, in—

"Against the Winds"

By Kate Jordan

Author of "The Creeping Tides," "Time the Comedian," "A City Sparrow," etc.

in the next—the September—issue of

THE GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE

A Little Girl *in* Tears

By ELLIS PARKER BUTLER

Illustrated by Oscar Frederick Howard

THE appetite for adventure grows by being fed. There was a night when Morley Smith, clubman and close to fifty years old, spurred by a chance book of fiction, let the check-boy at the club ease him into his eight-hundred-dollar fur-lined coat and sallied forth in a taxicab to seek adventure in a house chosen at random. Trivial as the adventure had been, it was a stirring event in Morley Smith's placid, well-groomed life. For a week he munched it in his mind and was satisfied. He glowed with a feeling that he had seen life. Then came the urge to further adventure.

When he had finished his ample dinner at the club, washed down by a half-pint of good sauterne (his favorite dinner-wine), Morley Smith had retired to the smoking-room, nothing farther from his mind than the thought of going out into the miserable, drizzly night. It was an excellent night on which to sit in drowsy comfort in the club, and he settled himself in a big chair, with a fat cigar and the daily paper. It may have been so slight a thing as a whispering of uneasiness in a region under his waistcoat where all was usually placid. Without knowing why, Morley Smith felt a vague discontent. He tossed the newspaper onto the table.

"Oh, piffle!" he murmured.

For an instant he thought of the opera—which bored him always. He thought of his favorite musical comedy, and thought of it with distaste. Suddenly, with the impetus of a flood, there swept through his consciousness a memory of the tremulous moments during his first amateur adventure, when he was not sure whether he would be kicked out of the apartment into which he had so daringly ventured, or accepted as a lawful visitor; and he desired once more to feel that thrill. He tapped the bell at his side.

"Henry," he said, "a taxi!"

"Yes, Mr. Smith," Henry said. "There is one outside now, sir."

There was now, in a manner of speaking, no turning back. Of course he might, if he chose, tell Henry he had changed his mind, or he might order the taxi-driver to carry him to this or that theater, but as an amateur adventurer, such faltering was not according to the rules of the game. The adventure began when the first word was spoken. When he was buttoned into his fur-lined coat and stood with one foot on the step of the taxi, the adventure was well along.

"Where to, Mr. Morley?" asked the driver.

On his way from the coat-room to the street, Morley Smith had plunged deeper into adventure than he had ever imagined possible. This time he would choose no quiet, respectable street but plunge into the heart of danger, where adventure teems. He would leap into the heart of the black area known as the East Side—vaguely so known to Morley Smith.

"East Houston Street," he said. "I say, I don't recall the number, what? When you get there, drive along a bit slowly, old chap, and I'll know the place."

THIS was going it strong. He halted the taxi before a tenement-house that was as like all the others on the block, as one third pea in a pod is like the fourth and fifth. He stepped out of the cab and looked up at the façade of the building, The East Side!

"Wait here for me," he said, and the driver clambered down and threw a robe over the hood of his cab. Discretion is the better part of valor. It was as well to have the cab at hand.

In the entrance Morley Smith did not find the row of letter-boxes he had expected. Here, evidently, one did not push a button; one entered and went where he chose. He looked up the dusky stairway. A man was coming down. Morley Smith stood until he should pass, for the stairway was narrow. The man stopped.

"Here already? That's quick work!" he said approvingly. "It's the fourth floor, the first door on the right. Go right up."

"Thank you," said Morley Smith, and he went up the stairs.

As you mount the stairs in a tenement, one side of the building is on your right. When you reach a landing and turn onto the floor of the dark, narrow hall, the other side of the building is on your right. Morley Smith's heart was beating rapidly, either with the elation due to the adventure or the exertion of climbing the stairs, as he knocked on the door to his right, after trying the bell in vain. He rapped as a soft-knuckled clubman would rap, not noisily but with authority, and at the second rapping the door opened.

A GIRL, not more than sixteen, thin, big-eyed and pale, answered. The room behind her was so scantily furnished as to seem but a temporary lodging-place. There was no carpet on the floor. On a couch pushed against the opposite wall was an unmade pile of cheap bedding; there was no chair and no table. Instead there were a short, nondescript wooden bench and a packing-case on which stood an oil lamp. On the box were a bottle of milk and a loaf of bread from which perhaps half had been cut away. On the wall, on hooks, hung several articles of female wearing-apparel and a dowdy little hat. The feather of the hat was still wet, or had dried while preserving its water-soaked appearance. All this Morley Smith saw, but more clearly he saw that the face of the girl was streaked with tears, and that tears still glistened in her eyes. She supported herself against the door-frame; in her hand she held a wad of wet handkerchief, and she used it on her eyes before she spoke.

"This is the wrong door," she said. "It is the door across the hall."

Morley Smith might have answered that no door was the wrong door for him, since no door was the right one. Instead he said "I beg pardon?" questioningly, while his eyes took the girl in.

"It is the door across the hall," the girl repeated. "You are the undertaker, aren't you?"

In the course of his first adventure Morley Smith had accepted the suggestion that he was an insurance-adjuster, and he was ready to accept almost any similar suggestion if it might further his adventures, but he recoiled from the necessity of posing, even temporarily, as an undertaker.

"My word, no!" he exclaimed. "By Jove, now! I don't look quite that, do I?"

The girl stared at him doubtfully.

"What?" queried the clubman.

"But you aren't—you can't be—" she exclaimed, almost with eagerness, and her tone was a question.

Morley Smith's heart beat even more rapidly. The adventure was moving swiftly and well. With a feeling that he was casting all precaution to the winds he answered.

"But I am," he said. "Jove, yes! Who else would I be?"

The girl drew the door more widely open and stood aside.

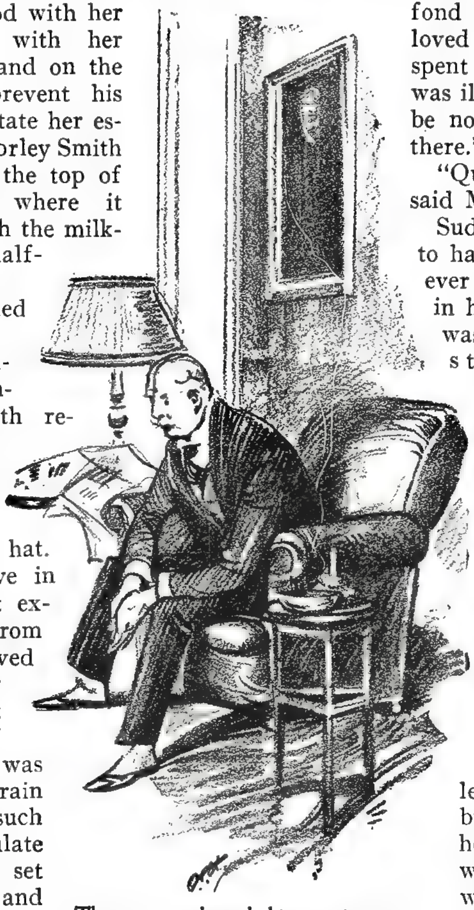
"I didn't know," she said. "I—I thought, from the name, you were a—a lady, of course, or I wouldn't have asked you to come here. But you can come in. I'm not afraid."

"By Jove, no!" said Morley Smith. "Why should you be?"

He wondered who he was, that she had thought, from his name, he was a lady. This, he thought, was jolly well worth while; it was ripping, don't you know! A girl in tears, and a corpse across the hall, and bread and milk on a raw pine box, and all that sort of thing—what? It might be some trick; she might try to blackmail him, but what of that? That in itself would be adventure, for he had never been blackmailed. He entered the room, and the girl closed the door. She stood with her back against it, with her hands behind her and on the knob, as if to prevent his leaving or to facilitate her escape if need be. Morley Smith placed his hat on the top of the packing-box, where it touched elbows with the milk-bottle and the half-loaf.

"Well?" queried the girl.

With care, pulling them by the fingers, Morley Smith removed his gloves, looking around the room the while. He placed them on top of the hat. There was no stove in the room—no heat except what came from the lamp. He removed his heavy coat, for all that, and laid it on one corner of the couch. He was trying, with a brain untrained to such work, to formulate words that would set the girl at ease and lead her to tell her story, if she had any story to tell. He frowned and looked at his well-manicured nails. When he looked up, the girl was holding a sheet of note-paper, looking at it. It was evident enough that she was trying, by rereading some letter, to convince herself that the presence there of Morley Smith—whoever she supposed him to be—was right. She seemed less doubtful now, and folded the letter with one hand, putting it in a pocket in her skirt.



There swept through his consciousness a memory of the tremulous moments during his first amateur adventure.

"You must be quick, Mr. Cardigan," she said. "He may be back any minute now."

"Ah, yes! So he may," Morley Smith said.

"She is over there," said the girl, pointing across the hall. "I thought it would be all right; she was always so fond of the child. She loved it, Mr. Cardigan. She spent hours with it while it was ill. I thought it would be no harm for her to go there."

"Quite so. Yes, indeed," said Morley Smith.

Suddenly the girl seemed to have a return of whatever suspicion had lurked in her mind. Perhaps it was that Morley Smith stood so long and so strangely, staring at her. Something like a sudden fear shone in her eyes, and she took a step forward—one step and then collapsed in a heap on the floor, a pitiful little heap of unconsciousness.

Had he not been seeking adventure, the turn affairs were taking would have annoyed Morley Smith exceedingly, but he felt an uplift of heart. The adventure was becoming worth while. It held mystery, a danger, a fair young woman in evident distress. He gathered the girl in his arms and carried her to the couch and laid her on it, her head resting on his soft, expensive coat. He hardly knew what to do next. That she had fainted was evident enough,—probably from undernourishment,—and he had a vague impression that when one fainted it was desirable to unloosen something and use a cold liquid, but there was no liquid but the milk in the bottle on the packing-box, and the girl's

"It is all right, Mother," the girl said reassuringly. "It is Mr. Cardigan—Mr. Francis Cardigan. He is going to show you where the work is."

gown seemed loose enough, turned low at the neck. He reached across the short space intervening for his hat and began fanning the girl with it. As he fanned, he heard some heavy-footed person coming up the stair. "The undertaker," he thought, "or the man she fears will return too soon." He looked up to see the door open and a man standing on the sill, questioning and doubtful.

The man was young, rough in appearance, and seemed powerfully built. He was, Morley Smith felt sure, the "he" whose return the young woman had seemed to dread. There was something the girl had wished done before this man returned. Morley Smith was not a weakling; he measured the young fellow with his eye as the youth crossed the room. He might try to throw the young man out of the place, and he had an impulse to do so. He straightened himself for the work if it should be necessary, but the young fellow came and bent over the girl and then looked up at Morley Smith questioningly.

"Thank God she's not dead!" he said; and then: "Is she very sick? Lord, what a place for her to be in! Can't we get her out of here, into a better sort of place? I've got some money, not much, but you can have all I've got. Don't you know of some hospital or something you can get her into, Doctor?"

"So I am a doctor now, am I?" thought Morley Smith. He rather preferred being mistaken for a doctor to being thought an undertaker. "I dare say!" he said, answering the young man. "Ah—quite so!"

He felt the lapel of his waistcoat, where his eyeglasses swung on their silken ribbon. He adjusted the glasses on his nose.

"And may I ask who you are?" Morley Smith questioned.

"What do you care who I am?" demanded the young man. "She's your job; don't you worry about me. Can't you do something? She's not dying, is she?"

The distress that shone upon the young man's face reassured Morley Smith. This young man was not going to attack anyone.

"She has only fainted," Morley Smith said. "But I say, now, who are you?"

"None of your—" the young man began, but he thought better of it. "Never you mind me," he said. "I'm her friend, if it comes to that. Me and her used to be engaged, if you want to know it. We used to be—"

"Sweethearts?" asked Morley Smith.

"That's it. We was going to be married, but she chucked me. I guess I've got a right to butt in on this—look how she has been living." He cast a glance at the room. "Say, can't you do something?"

Morley Smith took the girl's hand.

"You might get some water," he said. "Cold water, what?"

The young fellow looked for a utensil and took up the milk-bottle. Unceremoniously he threw the remaining milk on the floor and went to the door at the end of the room. It opened under his touch, and Morley Smith saw a second room, hardly less bare than the one in which he was. Here was a cheap white iron bed with tawdry coverings, a gas-stove, a sink. The room was evidently bedroom and kitchen combined—a room of the utmost poverty. The tap yielded water, however, and the young man came back with the milk-bottle filled. Morley Smith, with a feeling of oddity, for he was doing that which he had never expected to do, poured a little of the water into his hand and wet the girl's forehead.

"Say, I'd better not be here when she comes to," said the young man. "She aint wanting to see me, you understand? You let me wait in that other room there, and if it's all right—if she looks like she could stand it—you tell her John Dredd has been here. You—"

THE girl moved. The young man did not wait. He fled to the kitchen and closed the door. Once more Morley Smith wet his hand and moistened the girl's forehead. She opened her eyes, looking at Morley Smith dazedly. Then she sat up, letting her feet slide to the floor. Womanlike, her first act was to put her hand to her hair.

"I fainted," she said.

"Quite so!" said Morley Smith. "Jove, yes!"

The girl placed her hands on the edge of the couch, not attempting to rise.

"I feel queer," she said. "Let me sit here a minute, and I'll feel all right, I guess. I'm sort of weak, you see. I've been sick," she explained, "and I aint strong yet. She hasn't come in yet?"

"No," said Morley Smith. He did not know who "she" was, but the girl evidently referred to the person in the room across the hall, the person who had been so fond of the child, whoever the child had been. The girl leaned forward, breathing a little hard, and letting her chin rest on her chest.

"And he hasn't been here yet?" she asked.

"Who?" asked Morley Smith. "John Dredd?"

As if the shock were greater than a splash of icy water, the girl sat straight, her eyes suddenly alive again. She put her hand on Morley Smith's arm.

"What do you know about John Dredd?" she asked tensely. "He's not here? He hasn't been here?"

What her emotion was that caused her to utter the questions with such thrilling feeling, Morley Smith could not know. He thought he detected fear—an overwhelming fear.

"I say," he said, "you don't see him in the room here, what?"

The girl seemed relieved. She removed her hand from his arm.

"I don't get things clear yet," she said. "I'm dizzy yet, I think. You did say John Dredd, didn't you? Tell me! Please, tell me! Has he been here? Was he here while I fainted?"

"You're a bit off your head yet, what?" said Morley Smith. "Imagining things, what?"

For answer the girl struggled to her feet. She was still so weak that she had to put out a hand and support herself by holding to Morley Smith's arm. She stood thus a moment and then leaned against him, closing her eyes and swaying.

"I must get her now," she said, catching her breath and making an effort. "You must get her away before Father comes back. She will go with you. You'll tell her it will be all right. Tell her—tell her I've found a job for her—that you have found one. Braiding carpet-rags! Tell her it is a good job, and that the money will be enough to take care of me in a hospital. She will go with you then. That's all she wants now, to have money to send me to the hospital. And she will not be any trouble to them. Just some rags torn up, so she can braid them, and she will sit and be no trouble at all. They need only remind her that she is doing it to keep me in the hospital, if she forgets. They can tell her I am getting well, and she will sit and braid all day."

She took a step toward the door; but the door opened and a woman stood in it.

"Come in, Mother," the girl said; but the words were not necessary, for the woman did not hesitate. She might have been fifty, but she looked older, her dark hair being streaked with gray and her countenance pinched and pallid. She crossed the room to Morley Smith, her thin hands clasped against her breast, and looked up into his face with the pitifully questioning look of a child in her eyes.

"It is all right, Mother," the girl said reassuringly. "It is Mr. Cardigan—Mr. Francis Cardigan. I told you about him—don't you remember, Mother? He is going to show you where the work is, the easy work you can do to earn so much money, so I can be well."

The poor creature looked from Morley Smith to her daughter and back again.

"But it was a woman," she said falteringly. "It was a woman. Wasn't it a woman?"

She appealed to her daughter, trouble in her eyes. The girl drew the letter from her pocket.

"I said it was a woman, Mother," the girl answered. "See, I thought the name was Frances, Mother."

The woman took the letter in her hand and held it, but did not look at it. Instead, she questioned her daughter's eyes, and she saw truth in them.

"Yes; let us go at once," she said eagerly. "Get me my hat, Mary; I have a hat, haven't I? It doesn't matter. Take me quickly; I must get to work," she begged, appealing to Morley Smith. "I must earn a great deal of money, for Mary must go to the hospital. Take me now, please."

MORLEY SMITH had taken the letter from her hand and was reading it. He could not make much of it. The signature might have been *Frances Cardigan* or *Francis Cardigan,* having been hastily scrawled. It said all arrangements had been made and that the writer would call that evening, ready to conduct the mother as arranged. A cab would be in waiting, the letter said. He dropped the letter on the couch.

"She is right," said the girl; "you had better take her before Father comes back, or there will be trouble. It will be all right, Mother; you need not fear anything; and if—if you ever grow tired of the new place, you will remember you are doing it for me, so I can get strong and well again. She has no hat," she said to Morley Smith apologetically. "You wont mind taking her as she is?"

"It is cold out, you know," said Morley Smith.

"I'm sorry! She has no coat; neither have I," said the girl. "Father took them."

"By Jove, now!" said Morley Smith. "So you couldn't get away, what?"

"For whisky," said the girl simply, as if that explained it all; and so it did. Slowly, for he was not a man of brilliance of thought, Morley Smith began to understand things. This girl was trying to get her mother away to some place where she would be cared for; and it seemed the father objected. He was evidently a drunken brute.

Morley Smith was puzzled. His adventure was leading him into a difficulty he did not know how to handle. He couldn't take the old dame away, what? He couldn't take her down to the cab and bundle her in when he did not know where she was to be taken! For a moment he felt as if wisdom indicated that he should make some excuse and go out of the door and down the stair and disappear forever, but that would be a paltry ending for his adventure. There was something else, too, that forbade his flying in any such way; his sleek, clubman soul was annoyed and irritated by the room, by the poverty, by the pitiful weakness and distress of the two women. To sneak away would be but a tame and inefficient conclusion.

"I say!" he exclaimed suddenly.

He had had what seemed to him a glowing, brilliant inspiration. It had come to him like a flash of light out of darkness. The girl looked at him questioningly.

"I'm not that Frances Cardigan," he said. "No! Bally strange, I call it, what? Same name and all that sort of thing, don't you know. She may be a cousin of mine—cousin Fanny, what? Just so!"

The girl's eyes filled with trouble.

"But who are you, then?" she asked. "What are you doing here?"

"I'm the lawyer," said Morley Smith.

"The AMATEUR ADVENTURER"

She opened her eyes, looking at Morley Smith dazedly. Then she sat up, letting her feet slide to the floor. Womanlike, her first act was to put her hand to her hair.

"I fainted," she said.

"Quite so!" said Morley Smith. "Jove, yes!"

"I feel queer," she said. . . . . "She hasn't come in yet?"

"Jove, yes! I'm the lawyer chap—the lawyer Cardigan. Hunted you up here, and all that sort of thing, don't you know! Lost will, and that sort of thing, just like a book."

"Oh!' said the girl, staring at him wide-eyed. "Oh! Then—then that is how you knew about John Dredd?"

"My word, yes!" said Morley Smith. "Imagine your not guessing that! I would know about John Dredd, wouldn't I?"

"You were hunting for us? At Watertown? But—" The girl seemed to search her memory. "But who would make a will? Who would lose a will? Not Uncle Henry?"

"Jove, yes!" exclaimed Morley Smith. "You hit it the first time, what! Uncle Henry!"

"Uncle Henry!" said the girl, and as the thought that there might be some money came fairly into her mind, she drew a deep breath. Then her dejection returned like a load too heavy for her to bear. "But he would have had nothing to leave—nothing to make a will for," she said.

"No, by Jove!" said Morley Smith, mentally figuring how much money he had in his wallet in his inner pocket. "Not much. He wouldn't have—your Uncle Henry. Five hundred dollars, what?"

"Five hundred dollars!"

It was like a sigh of utter relief such as a doomed soul might utter when a reprieve came unexpectedly.

"It's jolly well five hundred dollars," said Morley Smith. "And no red tape, what? Just sign your name and that sort of business. Then I hand the money right over to you. Yes!"

"Did he leave it to me?" asked the girl, opening wide her eyes.

"Right-o!" said Morley Smith.

"But—but I was not born when he died," said the girl. "He did not know there was ever going to be any me. How could he—"

"I say, now!" said Morley Smith. "That's all law-stuff, what? Ordinances of the Board of Aldermen, and by-laws, and Constitution of the United States, Volume Fourteen, and all that sort of thing. Jove, yes! That's what we lawyers are for, what? Article Nine, Section Seven, and all that sort of thing."

He looked up to see the door open and a man standing on the sill, questioning and doubtful.

He was taking his wallet from his inner pocket, and he opened it and began counting the bills down on the packing-box.

"Are you sure, quite sure, it is all for me?" asked the girl tremulously.

"Two hundred and ninety, three hundred, three hundred and fifty—" counted the amateur adventurer. "Four hundred—"

He stopped short with the last bill, a fifty, in his hand.

"Right-o!" he said. "You'll have to show me who you are! Proof, you know, and all that; tell me all about yourself, and all that. I say, I almost forgot to make you prove that you were you, didn't I?"

"Because," said the girl, while her mother looked from one to the other with dazed, uncomprehending eyes, "I know the money can't be for me. I'm Mary Singleton, and this is my mother Martha Singleton, and my father is Edward. My mother was a Jarney—Mary Jarney. My uncle—the one I thought of when you spoke—was Henry Jarney, but he was always poor, and he died before I was born."

"I say, now!" said Morley Smith. "But how did you all get here, you know?"

"We came away from Watertown," said the girl. "It was my fault; there was a boy—a young man—I wanted to punish because he had flirted with another girl, and Father had an offer of a job here in New York, so I made him come. And Mother wanted to come. Father had taken to drink, and she thought he might quit it here, with so much else to interest him; but it was worse here, and he lost his place and was always drunk. So I got work, and Mother—"

The girl touched her forehead with her hand.

"But not badly," urged the girl. "Oh, she is not bad! Father wants to send her to the asylum, but I know it would be worse for her there, so I wrote to the Society, and they sent some one, and they thought as I did; but Father was mad with anger. He swore he would cut all our throats. That was why I wanted you to hurry, when I thought you were from the Society."

"Oh, I say, now!" exclaimed Morley Smith.

"Yes, I did not know what he would do if he came back and found you here, or found you taking Mother away. I don't know what he will do if he comes back now. If he will listen while you tell him about the money—"

"Give him a bit, to get rid of him—what?" suggested Morley Smith.

"Yes, that was what I thought," said the girl, "if the money is really mine. If he had a dollar or two, he would go out and not come back until it was all spent, and before then Miss Cardigan might come for Mother."

"To take me where I can earn a great deal of money for Mary," said the poor woman brightly. "Money to make Mary well."

"I have been sick, you understand," said the girl, "and I ought to be in a hospital now."

The mother wandered to the door and looked out, listening.

"So you understand now why I was frightened when you spoke of John Dredd," the girl said. "I had written to him."

"For a bit of cash, what?" asked Morley Smith.

"Oh, no! Not that!" exclaimed the girl. "To say farewell, for—for the last time—forever! I thought Mother would be where she would be cared for, and Father has been nothing but cruel and unkind, and I am so ill and so sick of everything. I hoped I would be dead and through with everything by now, Mr. Cardigan! Then they put me off for a day, the people at the Society, and I had to wait, although I had written to John that I meant to—to die. So I was afraid he might have come. I was afraid he had received my letter and might be here, and I wanted to do what I had written—after Mother had gone. It was silly of me to think he had come, for I don't know where John Dredd may be by now. He may be anywhere in the world, or dead. He probably does not care where I am, or whether I am dead or not. But now," she said more cheerfully, "I will go to the hospital—if this money is mine. I will get well."

"Jove, yes!" said Morley Smith. "There's not a bit of doubt you are the girl."

He felt in his pocket for something she might sign, and found the latest annual statement of his club. He made her sign her name to this—on the blank sheet—and tucked it carefully away in his inner pocket. This adventure was working out nicely. He had plunged into it, and he was getting out again, and that is the ultimate perfection in adventures. The few dollars meant nothing to him; he had more than he knew what to do with.

"Right-o!" he said cheerfully. "So now I'll just be toddling along. Good night!"

"You are sure it is all right?" the girl asked as he drew on his coat and sought his hat and gloves. "It means so much to me—it means life, and health."

"Quite sure!" said Morley Smith, and he bowed himself out of the room and closed the door. He was sure he heard the girl sob then. He stood an instant, with his hand on the knob, to make sure,

He stopped at the first florist's and sent white flowers to the room where even the sympathy of a poor woman with mind estranged had been welcome.

and then opened the door enough to look inside. The girl was clasping her mother in her arms in an agony of love.

"I say!" said Morley Smith. "The chappy you mentioned—John Dredd—he is in the other room, what? I all but forgot the poor beggar!"

Again the girl made the quick, feminine gesture of smoothing her hair. She went white and put her hand to her heart, and then she smiled and walked toward the other door, bravely, and Morley Smith closed the door and turned.

Across the hall the door was open, and he had a momentary glimpse of the interior of just such another room as the one he had left, but by the poor bed a woman was kneeling, and a man stood at her side, his back to the door. His hand was on her shoulder and his head was bowed.

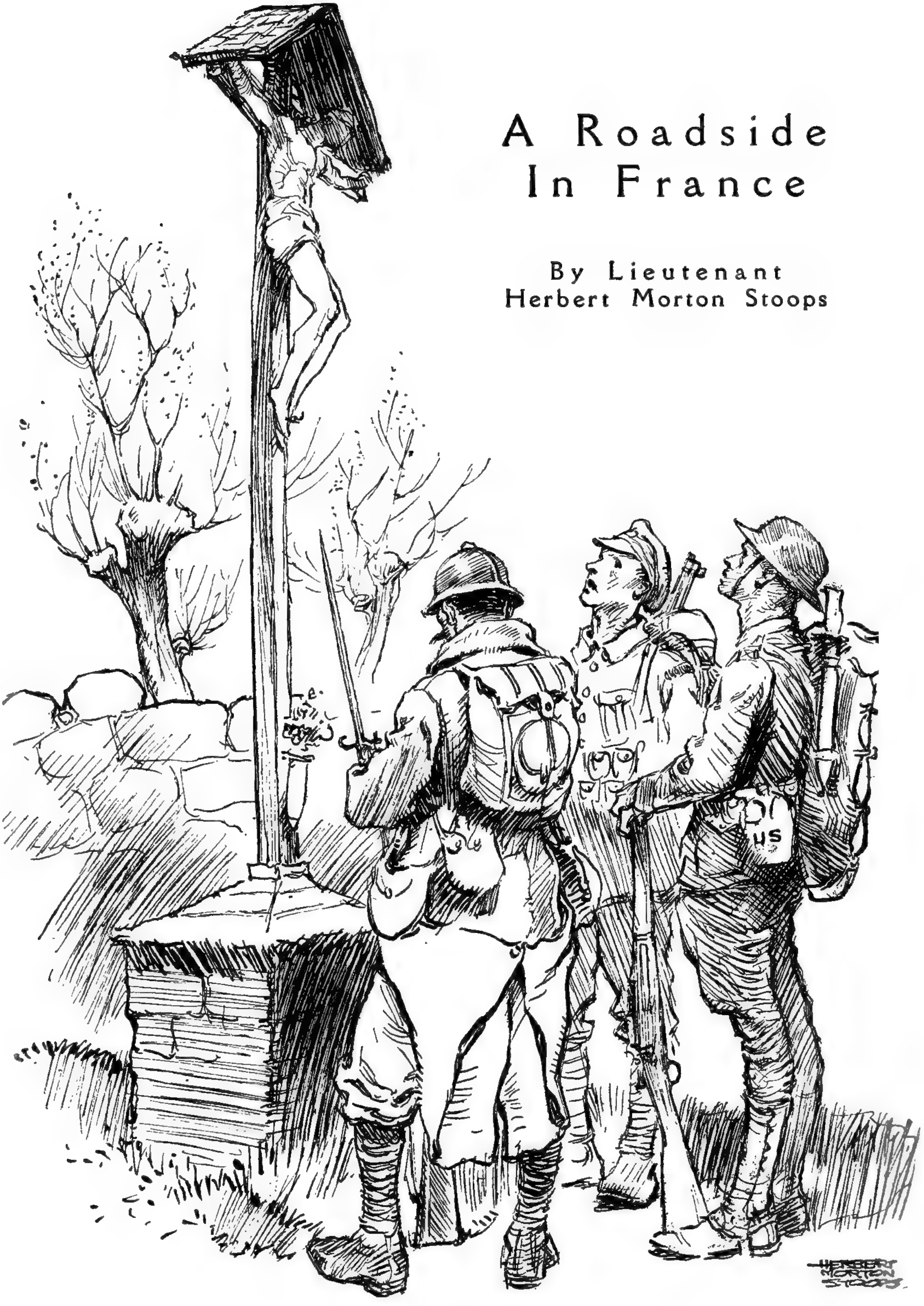
"Jove, yes!" said Morley Smith softly, but what he meant he did not know, although we can guess. He tiptoed down the stairs very quietly, and when he was in the drizzling outer air again, he repeated the words: "Jove, yes!"

Perhaps he meant that adventuring from a comfortable club chair was well worth while, for he stopped at the first florist's and sent white flowers to the room where even the sympathy of a poor woman with mind estranged had been welcome.

LIFE offers adventure on every hand if one looks for it. In "As Plain As Day"—which will appear in the next, the September, issue of THE GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE—Mr. Butler's Amateur Adventurer comes across a situation interesting indeed.

A Roadside In France

By Lieutenant
Herbert Morton Stoops



A Complete Résumé of the Opening Chapters of "Who Cares?"

SPRING had come, and it stirred Joan Ludlow to rebellion against a humdrum life in the country with her grim grandparents—with whom she had been left while her mother went off on a honeymoon with Joan's new stepfather. Joan longed for cities and people and excitement. And so when she met young Martin Gray, wealthy and his own master, he seemed to her the open door to freedom and—"life."

Martin was a good sort. And when (after Joan's grandparents had discovered that she was seeing a good deal of Martin and had decided to immure her in a finishing-school) Joan came to him one evening, bag and baggage, he promptly married her and took her to his house in New York. And then he discovered that Joan wished only his name—that she intended to keep him at a distance.

In New York, Joan found "life" in running with a giddy set of young people. Gilbert Palgrave, the husband of her friend Alice, paid her marked attentions. One evening she told Martin that she was tired and would go to bed early; but when, after he had gone out, Palgrave called, she accepted an invitation to go out to a dance with him.

Martin ran across them there, and angrily took Joan away from Palgrave. Outside, however, Joan slipped away from Martin, leaped into Palgrave's car and left Martin standing furious on the sidewalk. And then it was that Martin made the acquaintance of a little chorus-girl named Susie Capper and went with her to supper in her rooms.

Although later Joan would have been glad to make up with Martin, he failed to see it. And when poor little Susie spoke of her longing for the country, Martin, who had resolved to leave Joan for a time, since he might not have her, determined to take the little actress with him to his country place for an outing.

So it was that when Joan's mother and stepfather—Mr. and Mrs. George Harley—returned from their honeymoon, they found Joan married, but living alone in her new house. She explained that Martin was at their country-place playing golf. Shortly afterward an invitation came from Joan's grandmother for her and the Harleys to pay the old people a visit. The Ludlows' country-place was near Martin's, and Joan accepted eagerly.

"How romantic!" exclaimed Grandmother Ludlow from the doorway as Joan and the Harleys came up the steps of the old Colonial house. "Not one blushing bride, but two!"

AT first Joan could not account for the malice in the old lady's tone. But later she came to understand. For strolling in the woods one day,—her woods, and Martin's, as a matter of fact,—she met Susie Capper. Attracted by the chorus-girl's quaint manner, Joan had a long talk with her, still ignorant of the fact that Susie was staying at the Gray house, whither Martin had brought her.

Later, however, a whim seized Joan to surprise Martin, and at ten o'clock one evening she walked over to the Gray place and without knocking, marched in. Martin was sitting before the fire; and stretched on a couch, very much at home, was the odd girl Joan had met and talked with in the woods.

With a little gasp, the sense of all this going home to her, Susie scrambled awkwardly off the settee. This, then, was Martin's wife!

"Why, then you're — you're Mrs. Gray," she stammered.

Joan summoned her pride, put up her chin and gave a curious little bow. "Forgive me," she said; "I'm trespassing." And not daring to look at Martin, she turned and went out without another word.

Joan Gray, who took advantage of her youth, to play with fire.

Who Cares?

A NEW NOVEL OF REBELLIOUS YOUTH

By Cosmo Hamilton

CHAPTER XXVI

MRS. ALAN HOSACK, bearing a more than ever remarkable resemblance to those ship's figureheads that are still to be seen in the corners of old lumber-yards, led the way out to the sun-porch. Her lavish charms, her beaming manner, her clear blue eye, milky complexion, reddish hair and the large beads with which she insisted upon decorating herself made Howard Cannon's nickname of Cornucopia exquisitely right. She was followed by Mrs. Cooper Jekyll and a manservant, whose arms were full of dogs and books and newspapers.

"The dogs on the ground, Bennett," she said, "the books and papers on the table there, my chair on the right-hand side of it, and bring *that* chair forward for Mrs. Jekyll. We will have the lemonade at once. Tell Lestocq that I shall not want the car before lunch; ask Miss Disberry to telephone to Mrs. John Ward Harrison and say that I will have tea with her this afternoon with pleasure, and when those two good little sisters of mercy finally arrive (I could see them all sandy, struggling along the road from my room, Augusta—dear me, what a life!), they are to be given luncheon as usual and the envelope on the hall table. That will do, I think."

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The manservant was entirely convinced that it would.

"And now make yourself comfortable, dear Augusta, and tell me everything. So very kind of you to drive over like this on such a sunny morning. Yes, that's right. Take off that lugubrious harem veil—the mark of a Southampton woman—and let me see your beautiful face. Before I try to give you a chance to speak, I must tell you, and I'm sure you wont mind with your keen sense of humor, how that nice boy Harry Oldershaw describes those things. No, after all, perhaps I don't think I'd better. For one reason, it was a little bit undergraduate, and for another I forget." She chuckled and sat down, wabbling for a moment like an opulent blanc mange.

Minus the strange dark blue thing which had hidden her ears and nose and mouth, Mrs. Jekyll became human, recognizable and extremely good to look at. She wore her tight-fitting suit of white flannel like a girl, and even in that clear detective light she did not look a day over thirty. She painted with all the delicacy of an artist. She was there, as a close friend of Alice Palgrave, to discover why Gilbert had not gone with her to the Maine coast.

"I haven't heard from you since we left town," she said, beating about the bush, "and being in the neighborhood, I thought it would be delightful to catch a glimpse of you and hear your news. I have none, except that I have just lost the butler who has been with me for so long, and Edmond is having his portrait painted again for some club or institution. It's the ninth time, I believe. He likes it. It's a sort of rest-cure."

"And how did you lose that very admirable butler? Illness or indiscretion?"

"Neither. Commerce, I suppose one might call it. It appears that one of these get-rich-quick munition-men offered him double his wages to leave me, and Derbyshire couldn't resist it. He came to me with tears in his eyes and told me that he had to make the sacrifice owing to the increased cost of living. He has a family, you know. He said that the comic atmosphere of his new place might bring on neuritis, but he must educate his three boys. Really, there is a great deal of unsung heroism in the world, isn't there? In the meantime, I am trying to get accustomed to a Swiss, who's probably a German spy who will set up a wireless installation on the roof." Then she dropped her baited hook. "You have a large house-party, I suppose."

"Yes," said Mrs. Hosack, swinging her foot to keep the flies away. The wind was off the land. "Primrose is so depressed if the house isn't full. And so the D'Oylys are here—Nina more Junoesque than ever, and really quite like an Amazon in bathing-clothes—and Enid Ouchterlony, a little bitter, I'm afraid, at not being engaged to anyone yet; men are horribly scared of an intelligent girl, and after all, they don't marry for intelligence, do they? Harry Oldershaw, Metcalfe Hussey and Courtney Millet, all nice boys, and I almost forgot to add, Joan Gray, the charming girl. My good man is following at her heels like a bobtailed sheep-dog. Poor old dear! He's arrived at that pathetic period of a man's life when almost any really blonde girl still in her teens switches him into a second state of adolescence and makes him a most ridiculous object—what the novelists call the 'forty-nine feeling,' I believe."

BENNETT brought the lemonade and hurried away before his memory could be put to a further strain.

"Tell me about Joan Gray," said Mrs. Jekyll, letting out her line. "There's probably no truth in it, but I am told that she and Martin have agreed to differ. How quickly these romantic love-matches burn themselves out! I always say that a marriage made in heaven breaks up far sooner than one made on earth. It has so much farther to fall. Whose fault is it—hers or his?"

Mrs. Hosack bent forward and endeavored to lower her voice. She was a kind-hearted woman who delighted to see everyone happy and normal. "I'm very worried about those two, my dear," she answered. "There are all sorts of stories being told—one to the effect that Martin has gone off with a chorus-girl, another that Joan only married him to get away from her grandparents, and a third that they quarreled violently on the way home from church and have not been on speaking-terms since. I dare say there are many others, but whatever did happen, and something evidently did, Joan is happy enough, and every man in the house is sentimental about her. Look out there, for instance."

Mrs. Jekyll followed her glance and saw a girl in bathing-clothes sitting on the beach under a red-and-blue striped umbrella, encircled by the outstretched forms of half a dozen men. Beyond, on the fringe of a sea alive with bursting breakers, several girls were bathing alone.

"H'm!" said Mrs. Jekyll. "I should think that the second story is the true one. A tip-tilted nose, brown hair and violet eyes are better to flirt with than to marry. Well, I must run away if I'm to be back to lunch. I wish I could stay, but Edmond and his artist may kill my new butler unless I intervene. They are both hotly pro-Ally. By the way, I hear that Alice Palgrave has gone to the Maine coast with her mother, who is ill. I wonder where Gilbert is going."

"Well, I had a very charming letter from him two days ago, asking me if he could come and stay with us. He loves this house and the beach, and I always cheer him up, he said, and he is very lonely without Alice. Of course I said yes, and he will be here this afternoon."

Having landed her fish, Mrs. Jekyll rose to go. Gilbert Palgrave and Joan Gray—there was truth, then, in *that* story, as she had thought. She had heard of his having been seen everywhere with Joan night after night, and her sister-in-law, who lived opposite to the little house in East Sixty-seventh Street, had seen him leaving in the early hours of the morning more than once. A lucky strike, indeed! Intuition was a wonderful gift. She was highly pleased with herself.

"Good-by, my dear," she said. "I will drive over again some day this week and see how you are all getting on in this beautiful corner of the world. My love to Prim, please, and do remember me to the little siren."

And away she went, leaving Mrs. Hosack to wonder what was the meaning of her rather curious smile.

Only a hidebound prejudice on the part of the ministries of all the nations has precluded women from the diplomatic service.

CHAPTER XXVII

"AH, here you are," said Hosack, scrambling a little stiffly out of a hammock. "Well, have you had a good ride?"

Joan came up the steps with Harry Oldershaw, the nice boy. She was in white linen riding-kit, with breeches and brown top-boots. A man's straw hat sat squarely on her little fair head, and there was a brown-and-white spotted tie under her white silk collar. Color danced on her cheeks; health sparkled in her eyes; and there was a laugh of sheer high spirits floating behind her like the blown petals of a daisy.

"Perfectly wonderful!" she said. "I love the country about here, with the little oaks and sturdy ferns. It's so springy! And aren't the chestnut trees in the village a sight for the blind! I don't wonder you built a house in Easthampton, Mr. Hosack. Are we too late for tea?"

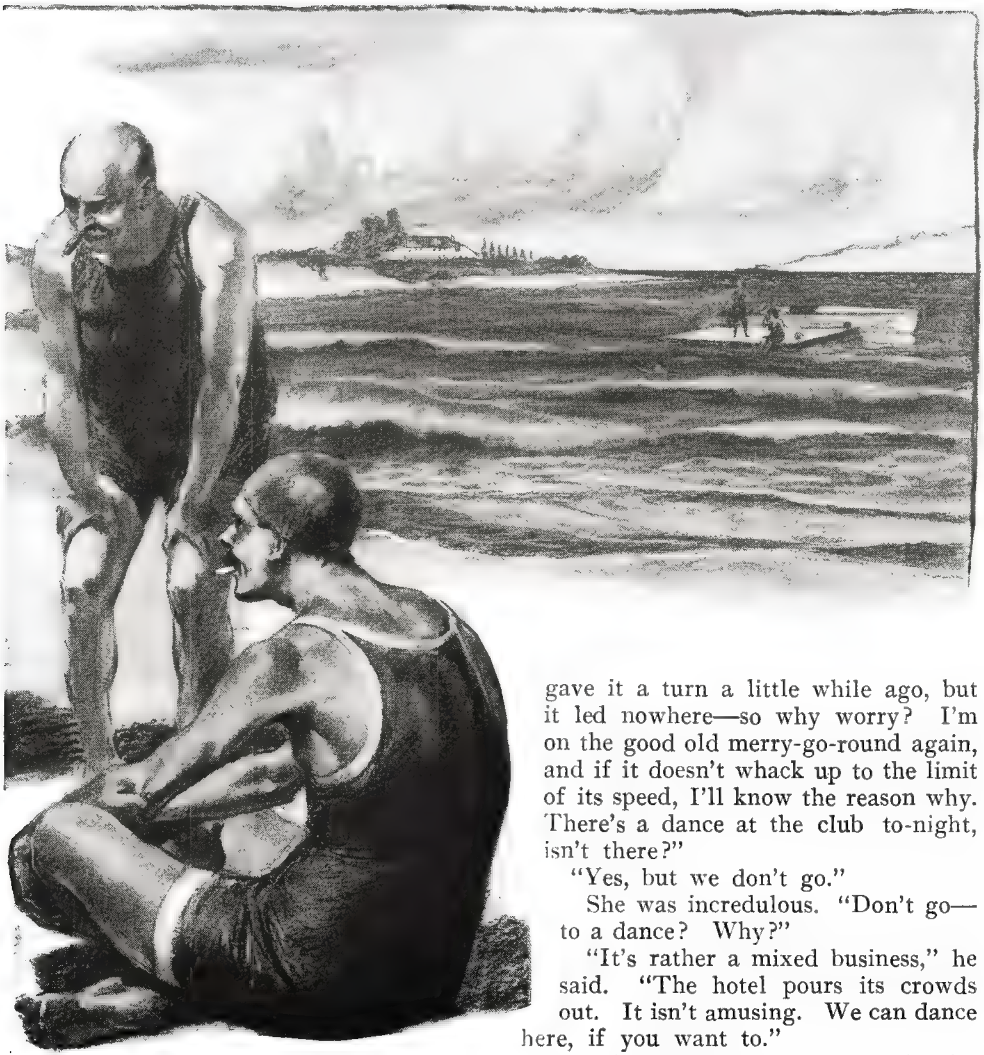
Hosack ran his eyes over her and blinked a little as though he had looked at the sun. "Too late by an hour," he said, with a sulky glance at young Oldershaw. "I thought you were never coming back." His resentment of middle age, and jealousy of the towering youth of the sun-tanned lad who had been Joan's companion were a little pitiful.

Harry caught his look and laughed with the sublime audacity of one who believes that he ranks among the Immortals. To him, forty-nine seemed to be a colossal sum of years, almost beyond belief. It was pathetic of this old fellow to imagine that he had any right to the company of a girl so springlike as Joan. "If we hadn't worn the horses to a frazzle," he said, "we shouldn't have been back till dark. Have a drink, Joan?"

Mrs. Jekyll saw a girl in bathing-clothes, encircled by half a dozen men. "H'm!" said Mrs. Jekyll.

"Yes, water—buckets of it. Hurry up, Harry." The boy, triumphant at being in favor, swung away, and Joan flung her crop into a cane sofa. "Where's everybody?" she asked.

"What's it matter?" said Hosack. "Sit here and talk to me for a change. I've hardly had a word with you all day." He caught her hand and drew her into the swinging hammock. "What a pretty thing you are!" he added, with a catch in his breath.



"I know," said Joan. "Otherwise I probably shouldn't be here, should I?" She forgot all about him and an irresistible desire to tease, at the sight of the sea—which, a stone's-throw from the house, pounded on the yellow sweep of sand and swooped up in large half-circles of glistening water. "I've a jolly good mind to have another dip before changing. What do you say?"

"No, don't," said Hosack, a martyr to the forty-nine feeling. "Concentrate on me for ten minutes, if only because I'm your host."

Joan pushed his hand away. "I've given up concentrating," she said. "I gave it a turn a little while ago, but it led nowhere—so why worry? I'm on the good old merry-go-round again, and if it doesn't whack up to the limit of its speed, I'll know the reason why. There's a dance at the club to-night, isn't there?"

"Yes, but we don't go."

She was incredulous. "Don't go—to a dance? Why?"

"It's rather a mixed business," he said. "The hotel pours its crowds out. It isn't amusing. We can dance here, if you want to."

But her attention was caught by young Oldershaw, who came out carrying a glass and a pitcher of iced water. She sprang up and went to meet him, the dance forgotten, Hosack forgotten. Her mood was that of a bird, irresponsible, restless. "Good for you!" she said, and drank. "Nothing like water, is there?" She smiled up at him.

He was as pleased with himself as though he owned the reservoir. "Have another?"

"I should think so." And she drank again, put the glass down on the first place that came to hand, relieved him of the pitcher, put it next to the glass, caught hold of his muscular arm, ran him down the steps and along the board path to the beach. "I'll race you to the sea," she cried, and was off like a mountain goat.

He was too young to let her beat him, and waited for her with a broad grin on his attractive face.

He was about to cheek her, when she held up a finger and with a little exclamation of delight pointed to the sky behind the house. The sun was setting among a mass of royal clouds. A golden wand had touched the dunes and the tips of the scrub, and all over the green of the golf-course, still dotted with scattered figures, waves of reflected lusters played. To the left of the great red ball one clear star sparkled like an eye.

Just for a moment her lips trembled, and her young breasts rose and fell, and then she threw her head up and wheeled round and went off at a run. Not for her to think back, or remember similar sights behind the woods near Marty's place. Life was too short for pain. "Who Cares?" was her motto once more, and this time joy riding must live up to its name.

Harry Oldershaw followed, much puzzled at Joan's many quick changes of mood. Several times during their irresponsible chatter on the beach between dips, her laughter had fallen suddenly, like a dead bird, and she had sat for several minutes as far away from himself and the other men as though they were cut off by a thick wall. Yesterday, in the evening after dinner, during which her high spirits had infected the whole table, he had walked up and down the board path with her under the vivid white light of a full moon, and she had whipped out one or two such savage things about life that he had been startled. During their ride that afternoon, too, her bubbling chatter of light stuff about people and things had several times shifted into comments as to the conventions that were so careless as to make him ask himself whether they could really have come from lips so fresh and young. And why had that queer look of almost childlike grief come into her eyes a moment ago at the sight of an everyday sunset?

He was mightily intrigued. She was a queer kid, he told himself, as changeable and difficult to follow as some of the music by men with such weird names as Rachmaninoff and Tschaikowsky that his sister was so precious fond of playing. But she was unattached and frightfully pretty, and always ready for any fun that was going, and she liked him more than the others, and he liked being liked and although not hopelessly in love was ready and willing and even anxious to be walked on if she would acknowledge his existence in no other way. It was none of his business, he told himself, to speculate as to what she was trying to hide away in the back of her mind, from herself as well as from everybody else. This was his last vacation as a Yale man, and he was all out to make the most of it.

AS soon as he was at her side, she ran her hand through his arm and fell into step. The shadow had passed, and her eyes were dancing again. "It appears that the Hosacks turn up their exclusive noses at the club dances," she said. "What are we going to do about it?"

"There's one to-night, isn't there? Do you want to go?"

"Of course I do. I haven't danced since away back before the great wind. Let's sneak off after dinner for an hour without a word to a soul, and get our fill of it. There's to be a special jazz band to-night, I hear, and I simply can't keep away. Are you game, Harry?"

"All the way," said young Oldershaw, "and it will be the first time in the history of the Hosacks that any members of their house-parties have put in an appearance at the club at night. No wonder Easthampton has nicknamed the place St. James' Palace—eh?"

Joan shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, my dear boy," she said, "life's too short for all that stuff, and there's no hobby so painful as cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. And after all, what's the matter with Easthampton people? I'd even go to a chauffeurs' ball if the band was the right thing. Wouldn't you?"

"Ah, here you are," said Hosack. "Well, have you had a good ride?" Joan came up the steps with Harry Oldershaw She was in white linen riding-kit, with breeches and brown top-boots. "Perfectly wonderful!" she said. "Are we too lat for tea?"

"With you," said Harry. "Democracy forever!"

"Oh, I'm not worrying about democracy. I'm out for a good time under any conditions. That's the only thing that matters. Now let's go back and change. It's too late to bathe. I'll wear a new frock to-night, built for fox-trotting, and if Mrs. Hosack wants to know where we've been when we come back as innocent as spring lambs, leave it to me. Men can't lie as well as women can."

"It wont be Mrs. Hosack who'll ask," said Harry. "Bridge will do its best to rivet her ubiquitous mind. It's the old man who'll be peeved. He's crazy about you, you know."

Joan laughed. "He's very nice and means awfully well and all that," she said, "but of course he isn't to be taken seriously. No men of middle age ought to be. They all say the same things with the same expressions, as though they get them from the same books, and their gamboling makes their joints creak. It's all like playing with a fire of damp logs. I like something that can blaze and scorch. The game counts then."

"Then you ought to like me," said Harry, doing his best to look the very devil of a fellow.

EVEN he had to join in Joan's huge burst of merriment. He had humor as well as a sense of the ridiculous, and the first made it possible for him to laugh at himself—a rare and disconcerting gift which would utterly prevent his ever entering the Senate. "You might grow a mustache and wax the tips, Harry," she said, when she had recovered sufficiently well to be able to speak, "you might curl your hair with tongs and take dancing-lessons from a tango-lizard or go in for a course of sotto-voce sayings from a French portrait-painter, but you'd still remain the nice boy. That's why I like you. You're as refreshing and innocuous as a lettuce salad and you may glare as much as you like. I hope you'll never be spoiled. Come on. We shall be late for dinner." And she made him quicken his step through the dry sand.

Being very young, he was not quite sure that he appreciated that type of approval. He had liked to imagine that he was distinctly one of the bold, bad boys, a regular dog, and all that. He had often talked that sort of thing in the rooms of his best chums whose mantelpieces were covered with the photographs of little ladies, and he hoarded in his memory two episodes at least of jealous looks from engaged men. But after all, with Joan, who was married, although it was difficult to believe it, it wouldn't be wise to exert the whole force of the danger that was in him. He would let her down lightly, he told himself, and grinned as he said it. She was right. He was only a nice boy, and that was because he had had the inestimable luck to possess a mother who was one in a million.

The rather pretentious but extremely civilized house that stood alone in all its glory between the sea and the sixth hole was blazing with lights as they returned to it. The color had gone out of the sky, and other twinkling eyes had appeared, and the breeze, now off the sea, had a sting to it. Toad soloists were trying their voices for their evening concert, and crickets were at work with all their well-known enthusiasm. Bennett, with a sunburned nose, was tidying up the veranda and some one with a nice light touch was playing the rhythmic jingles of Jerome Kern on the piano in the drawing-room.

Still with her hand on Harry Oldershaw's arm, Joan made her way across the lofty hall, caught sight of Gilbert Palgrave coming eagerly to meet her, and waved her hand.

"Oh, hello, Gilbert," she cried out. "Welcome to Easthampton." And she ran upstairs.

With a strange contraction of the heart, Palgrave watched her out of sight. She was his dream come to life. All that he was and hoped to be he had placed forever at her feet. Dignity, individualism, egoism—all had fallen before this young thing. She was water in the desert, the north star to a man without a compass. He had seen her and come into being. It was wonderful and awful!

But who was that cursed boy?

CHAPTER XXVIII

SIX weeks had dropped off the calendar since the night at Martin's house.

Facing Grandmother Ludlow in the morning with her last handful of courage, Joan had told her that she had been called back to town. She had left immediately after breakfast in spite of the protests and entreaties of everyone, including her grandfather, down whose wrinkled cheeks the tears had fallen unashamed. With a high head and her best willful manner she had presented to them all in that old house the bluff of easy-mindedness, only to burst like a bubble as soon as the car had turned the corner into the main road.

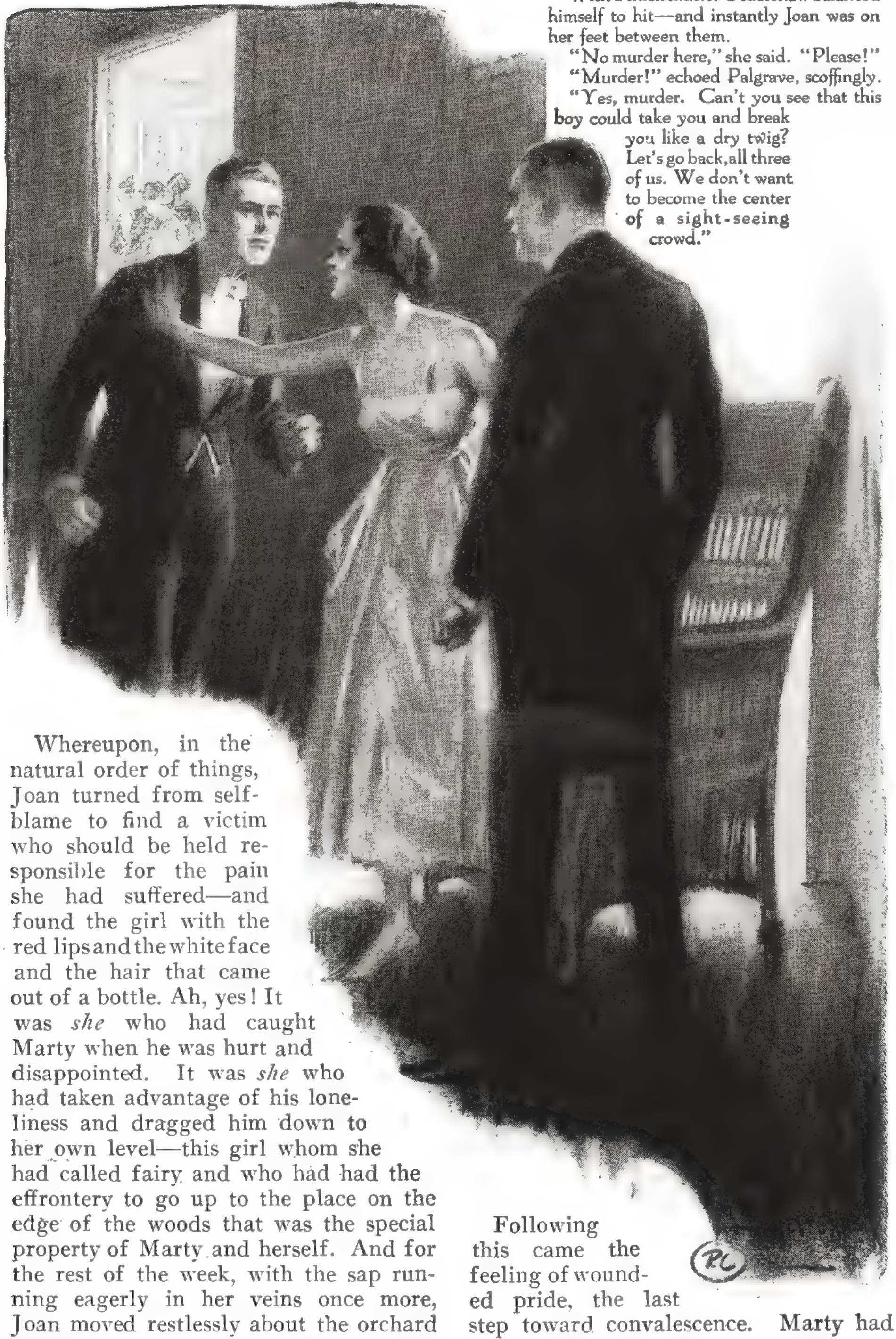
She had gone to the little house in New York, and with a numbed heart and a constant pain in her soul had packed some warm-weather clothes, and leaving her maid behind had hidden herself away in the cottage, on the outskirts of Greenwich, of an old woman who had been in the service of her school. As a long-legged girl of twelve, she had stayed there once with her mother for several days before going home for the holidays. She felt like a wounded animal, and her one desire was to drag herself into a quiet place to die.

It seemed to her then, under the first stupendous shock of finding that Marty was with that girl, that death was the next certain thing. Day after day and night after night, cut to the quick, she waited for it to lay its cold hand upon her and snuff her out like a tired candle whose little light was meaningless in a brutal world. Marty, even Marty, was no longer a knight, and she had put him into broadcloth.

Not in the sun, but in the shadow of an apple-orchard all big with blossom, her days had passed in lonely suffering. Death was in the village; that was certain. She had seen a little procession winding along the road to the cemetery the morning after her arrival. She was ready. Nothing mattered, now that Marty, even Marty, had done this thing while she had been waiting for him to come and take her across the bridge—anxious to play the game to the very full, eager to prove to him that she was no longer the kid that he thought her who had coolly shown him her door. "I am here, Death," she whispered, "and I want you. Come for me."

ALL Joan's first feelings were that she ought to die, that she had failed and that her disillusion as to Marty had been directly brought about by herself. She saw it all honestly and made no attempt to hedge. By day, she sat quietly, big-eyed, amazingly child-like waiting for her punishment, watched by the practical old woman with growing uneasiness and amazement. By night she lay awake as long as she could, listening for the soft footstep of the one who would take her away. At meals she was bullied by the old woman, who was of the school which holds firmly to the belief that unless the people who partake of her food do not do so to utter repletion, a personal insult is intended. At other times she went out into the orchard and sat with Joan, and burning with a desire to cheer her up, gave her, in the greatest detail, the story of all the deaths, diseases and quarrels that had ever been known to the village. And every day the good sun warmed and encouraged the earth, drew forth the timid heads of plants and flowers, gave beauty even to the odd corners once more, and did his allotted task with a generosity difficult to praise too highly. And Death paid visits here and there but passed the cottage by.

At the beginning of the second week Nature, who has no patience with any attempt to refute her laws, especially on the part of those who are young and vigorous, took Joan in hand. "What is all this, my girl?" she said. "Sitting here with your hands in your lap while everybody and everything is working and making and preparing! Stir yourself, bustle up, get busy; there's lots to be done in the springtime if the autumn is to bear fruit. You're sound and whole, for all that you've been hurt. If you were not, Death would be here without your calling him. Up you get, now." And with good-natured roughness, she laid her hand under Joan's elbow and hoisted her to her feet.



With a thick mutter Oldershaw balanced himself to hit—and instantly Joan was on her feet between them.

"No murder here," she said. "Please!"

"Murder!" echoed Palgrave, scoffingly.

"Yes, murder. Can't you see that this boy could take you and break you like a dry twig? Let's go back, all three of us. We don't want to become the center of a sight-seeing crowd."

Whereupon, in the natural order of things, Joan turned from self-blame to find a victim who should be held responsible for the pain she had suffered—and found the girl with the red lips and the white face and the hair that came out of a bottle. Ah, yes! It was *she* who had caught Marty when he was hurt and disappointed. It was *she* who had taken advantage of his loneliness and dragged him down to her own level—this girl whom she had called fairy and who had had the effrontery to go up to the place on the edge of the woods that was the special property of Marty and herself. And for the rest of the week, with the sap running eagerly in her veins once more, Joan moved restlessly about the orchard and the garden, heaping blame for her trouble on to the all too golden head of Tootles.

Following this came the feeling of wounded pride, the last step toward convalescence. Marty had chosen between herself and this girl. Without giving her a real chance to put things right, he had slipped away silently and taken Tootles with him. Not she, but the girl with the red lips and the pale face and the hair that came out of a bottle, had stripped Marty of his armor, and the truth of it was that Marty—yes, even Marty—was not really a knight but a very ordinary man.

Out of the orchard and the garden Joan went, once she had arrived at this stage, and tramped the countryside with her ears tuned to catch the alluring strains of the mechanical music of the roundabout. She had not only been making a fool of herself but had been made to look a fool, she thought. Her pain and suffering and disillusion had been wasted. All these dull and lonely days had been wasted and thrown away. Death must have laughed to see her sitting in the shadow of the apple trees waiting for a visit that was undeserved. Marty could live and enjoy himself without her. That was evident. Very well—then she could live and enjoy herself without Marty. The earth was large enough for them both, and if he could find love in the person of that small girl, she could surely find it in one or other of the men who had whispered in her ear. Also there was Gilbert Palgrave, who had gone down upon his knees.

And that was the end of her isolation, her voluntary retirement. Back she went to the City of Dreadful Nonsense, bought clothes and shoes and hats, found an invitation to join a house-party at Southampton, made no effort to see or hear from Marty, and sprang back into her seat in the merry-go-round. "Who Cares?" she cried again. "Nobody," she answered. "What I do with my life matters to no one but myself. Set the pace, my dear, laugh and flirt and play with fire and have a good time. A short life and a merry one!"

And then she joined the Hosacks, drank deep of the wine of adulation; and when, at odd times, the sound of Marty's voice echoed in her memory, she forced it out and laughed it away. "Who Cares?" was his motto too—red lips and white face and hair that came out of a bottle!

And now here was Gilbert Palgrave with the fire of love in his eyes.

CHAPTER XXIX

WHEN Mrs. Hosack rose from the dinner-table and sailed Olympically into the drawing-room surrounded by graceful light craft in the persons of Primrose and her girl friends, the men, as usual, followed immediately. The house was bridge mad, and the tables called everyone except Joan, the nice boy and Gilbert Palgrave.

During the preliminaries of an evening which would inevitably run into the small hours, Joan went over to the piano and with what was a quite unconscious touch of irony played one of Heller's inimitable "Sleepless Nights," with the soft pedal down. The large, imposing room, a chaotic mixture of French and Italian furniture with Flemish tapestries and Persian rugs, which accurately typified the ubiquitous mind of the hostess, was discreetly lighted. The numerous screened windows were open, and the soft warm air came in tinged with the salt of the sea.

Palgrave, refusing to cut in, stood about like a disembodied spirit, with his eyes on Joan, from whom, since his arrival, he had received only a few fleeting glances. He watched the cursed boy, as he had labeled him, slip over to her, lean across the piano and talk eagerly. He went nearer and caught, "the car in half an hour," and "not a word to a soul." After which, with jealousy gnawing at his vitals, he saw Harry Oldershaw moon about for a few minutes and then make a fishlike dart out of the room.

Palgrave had been prepared to find Joan amorously surrounded by the men of the party, but not on terms of sentimental intimacy with a smooth-faced lad. In town she had shown preference for sophistication. He went across to the piano and waited impatiently for Joan to finish the piece, which somehow fitted into his mood. "Come out," he said then. "I want to speak to you."

But Joan let her fingers wander into a waltz and raised her eyebrows. "Do I look so much like Alice that you can order me about?" she asked.

He turned on his heel with the look

of a dog at which a stone has been flung by a friend, and disappeared.

TWO minutes later there was a light touch on his arm, and Joan stood at his side on the veranda. "Well, Gilbert," she said, "it's good to see you again."

"So good that I might be a man touting for an encyclopedia," he answered angrily.

She sat upon the rough stone wall and crossed her little feet. Her new frock was white and soft and very perfectly simple. It demanded the young body of a nymph, and was satisfied. The magic of the moon was on her. She might have been Spring resting after a dancing day.

"If you were," she said, taking a delight in unspoiling this immaculate man, "I'm afraid you'd never get an order from me. Of all things, an encyclopedia must be accompanied by a winning smile and irresistible manners. I suppose you've done lots of amusing things since I saw you last."

He went nearer, so that her knees almost touched him. "No," he said, "—only one; and that was far from amusing. It has marked me like a blow. I've been waiting for you. Where have you been, and why haven't you written me a single letter?"

"I've been ill," she said. "Yes, I have—quite ill. I deliberately set out to hurt myself, and succeeded. It was an experiment that I sha'n't repeat. I don't regret it. It taught me something that I shall never forget. Never too young to learn, eh? Isn't it lovely here? Just smell the sea, and look at those lights bobbing up and down out there. I never feel any interest in ships in the daytime, but at night, when they lie at anchor and I can see nothing but their lonely eyes, I would give anything to be able to fly round them like a gull and peep into their cabins. Do they affect you like that?"

Palgrave wasn't listening to her. It his memory. She had been more than ever in his blood all these weeks. She was like water in a desert, or sunlight to a man who comes up from a mine. He had found her again, and he thanked whatever god he recognized for that; but he was forced to realize from her imperturbable coolness and unaffected ease that she was farther away from him than ever. To one of his temperament and schooling, this was hard to bear with any sort of self-control. The fact that he wanted her of all the creatures on earth, that she, alone among women, had touched the fuse of his desire, and that knowing this she could sit there a few inches from his lips and put a hundred miles between them, maddened him, to whom nothing hitherto had been impossible.

"Have I got to begin all over again?" he asked with a sort of petulance.

"Begin what, Gilbert?" There was great satisfaction in playing with one who thought that he had only to touch a bell to bring the moon and the sun and the stars to do his bidding.

"Good Lord!" he cried out. "You're like wet sand on which a man expects to find yesterday's footmarks. Hasn't anything of me and the things I've said to you remained in your memory?"

"Of course," she said. "I shall never forget the night you took me to the Brevoort, for instance, and supplied the key to all the people with unkempt hair and comic ties."

Some one on the beach below shot out a low whistle.

A LITTLE thrill ran through Joan. In ten minutes, perhaps less, she would be dancing once more to the lunatic medley of a jazz band—dancing with a boy who gave her all that she needed of him and asked absolutely nothing of her, dancing among people who were less than the dust in the scheme of things so far as she was concerned, except to give movement and animation to the room, and to be steered through. That was the right attitude toward life and its millions, she told herself. As salt was to an egg, so was the element of false romance to this golf-club dance. In a minute she would get rid of Palgrave—yes, even the fastidious Gilbert Palgrave, who had never been able quite to disguise the fact that his love for her was something of a condescension. She would fly in the face of the unwritten law of the pompous house on the dunes and mingle with what Hosack had called the crowd from the hotel. It was all laughable and petty, but it was what she wanted to do. It was all in the spirit of "Who Cares?" that she had caught at again. Why worry as to what Mrs. Hosack might say or Palgrave might feel? Wasn't she as free as the air to follow her whims without a soul to make a claim upon her or hold out a hand to stop?

Through these racing thoughts she heard Palgrave talking and crickets rasping and frogs croaking and a sudden burst of laughter and talk in the drawing-room, and the whistle come again.

"Yes," she said, because "Yes" was as good as any other word. "Well, Gilbert, dear, if you're not an early bird, you will see me again later." And she jumped down from the wall.

"Where are you going?"

"Does that matter?"

"Yes, it does. I want you here. I've been waiting all these weeks."

She laughed. "It's a free country," she said, "and you have the right to indulge in any hobby that amuses you. *Au revoir,* old thing!" And she spread out her arms like wings and flew to the steps and down to the beach and away with some one who had sent out a signal.

"That boy!" said Palgrave. "I'm to be turned down for a cursed boy! We'll know about that."

And he followed, seeing red.

HE saw them get into a low-lying two-seater built on racing lines, heard a laugh flutter into the air, watched the tail-light sweep round the drive and become smaller and smaller along the road.

So that was it, was it? He had been relegated to the hangers-on, reduced to the ranks, put into the position of any one of the number of extraneous men who hung round this girl-child for a smile and a word! That was the way he was to be treated, he, Gilbert Palgrave, the connoisseur, the decorative and hitherto indifferent man who had refused to be subjected to any form of discipline, and who had never, until Joan had come into his life, allowed anyone to put him a single inch out of his way, who had been triumphantly one-eyed and selfish—that was the way he was to be treated by the very girl who had fulfilled his once wistful hope of making him stand eager and startled and love-sick in the chaos of individualism and indolence, who had shaken him into the Great Emotion! Yes, he'd know about that.

Bareheaded, and surging with untranslatable anger, he started walking. He was in no mood to go into the drawing-room and cut into a game of bridge and show his teeth and talk the pleasant inanities of polite society. All the stucco of civilization fell about him in slabs as he made his way with long strides out of the Hosacks' place, across the sandy road and on to the springy turf of the golf-links. It didn't matter where he went, so long as he got elbow-room for his indignation, breathing-space for his rage and a wide loneliness for his blasphemy.

He had stood humble and patient before this virginal girl. He had confessed himself to her with the tremendous honesty of a man made simple by an overpowering love. She was married. So was he. But what did that matter to either of them whose only laws were self-made? The man to whom she was not even tied meant as little to her as the girl he had foolishly married meant or would ever mean to him. He had placed himself at her beck and call. In order to give her amusement, he had taken her to places in which he wouldn't have been seen dead, had danced his good hours of sleep away for the pleasure of seeing her pleased, had revolutionized his methods with women and paid her tribute by the most scrupulous behavior, and finally, instead of setting out to turn her head with pearls and diamonds, he had recognized her as intelligent and paid her the compliment of treating her as such, had stated his case and waited for the time when the blaze of his love would set her alight and bring her to his arms.

There was something more than mere egotism in all this—the natural egotism of a man of great wealth and good looks, who had walked through life on a metaphorical red carpet pelted with flowers by adoring women to whom even virtue was well lost in return for his attention. Joan, like the spirit of spring, had come upon Palgrave at that time of his life when youth had left him and he had stood at the great crossroads, one leading down through a morass of self-indulgence to a hideous senility, the other leading up over the stones of sacrifice and service to a dignified usefulness. Her fresh young beauty and enthusiasm, her golden virginity and unself-consciousness, her unaffected joy in being alive, her superb health and vitality had shattered his conceit and self-obsession, broken down his aloofness and lack of scruple and filled with her face and form the empty frame that he had hung in his best thoughts.

There was something of the great lover about Palgrave in his new and changed condition. He had laid everything unconditionally at the feet of this young thing. He had shown a certain touch of bigness, of nobility, he of all men, when after his outburst in the little drawing-room that night he had stood back to wait until Joan had grown up. He had waited for six weeks, going through tortures of Joan-sickness that were agonizing. He had asked her to do what she could for him in the way of a little kindness, but had not received one single line. He was prepared to continue to wait, because he knew his love to be so great that it must eventually catch hold of her like the licking flame of a prairie-fire.

And it staggered him to arrive at the Hosacks' place and find her fooling with a smooth-faced lad. It outraged him to be left cold, as though he were a mere member of the house-party and watch her to whom he had thrown open his soul, go joy-riding with a cursed boy. It was, in a sort of way, heresy.

It proved an almost unbelievable inability to realize the great thing that this was. Such love as his was not an everyday affair, to be treated lightly and carelessly. It was on the contrary rare and wonderful and as such to be, at any rate, respected. That's how it seemed to him, and he was determined to see about it.

He drew up short, at last, on his strange walk across the undulating course. The light from the country club streamed across his feet, and the jangle of the jazz band broke into his thoughts. From where he stood, surprised to find himself in civilization, he could see the crowd of dancers through the open windows of what resembled a huge bungalow, at one side of which a hundred motorcars were parked. He went nearer, drawn forward against his will. He was in no mood to watch a summer dance of the younger set. He made his way to the wide veranda and stood behind the rocking-chairs of parents and friends. But not for more than fifty seconds. There was Joan with her lovely laughing face alight with the joy of movement, held in the arms of the cursed boy. Between two chairs he went, into and across the room in which he was a trespasser, tapped young Oldershaw sharply on the arm, cut into the dance, and before the boy could recover from his surprise, was out of reach with Joan against his heart.

"Oh, well done, Gilbert," said Joan a little breathlessly. "When Marty did that to you at the Crystal Room—"

She stopped, and a shadow fell on her face and a little tremble ran across her lips.

CHAPTER XXX

SMOKING a cigarette on the veranda, young Oldershaw waited for the dance to end. It was encored several times, but being a sportsman and having achieved a monopoly of Joan during all the previous dances, he let this man enjoy his turn. He was a great friend of hers, she had said on the way to the club, and was, without doubt, a very perfect person, with his wide-set eyes and well-groomed head, his smooth mustache and the cleft on his chin. Oldershaw didn't like him. He had decided that at a first glance. Palgrave was too supercilious and self-assured and had a way of looking clean through men's heads. He conveyed the impression of having bought the earth—and Joan. A pity he was too old for a year or two of Yale. That would make him a bit more of a man.

When presently the jazz band paused in order to recuperate,—every member of it deserving first aid for the wounded,—and Joan came out for a little air with Palgrave, Harry strolled up. This was his evening, and in a perfectly nice way he conveyed that impression by his manner. He was, however, quite determined to give nothing more away. He conveyed that, also.

"Shall we sit on the other side?" he asked. "The breeze off the sea keeps the mosquitoes away a bit."

Refusing to acknowledge his existence, Palgrave guided Joan toward a vacant chair. He went on with what he had been saying, and swung the chair round.

Joan was smiling again.

Oldershaw squared his jaw. "I advise against this side, Joan," he said. "Let me take you round."

He earned a quick, amused look and a half-shrug of white shoulders from Joan. Palgrave continued to talk in a low, confidential voice. He regarded Oldershaw's remarks as no more of an interruption than the chorus of the frogs.

Oldershaw's blood began to boil, and he had a queer prickly sensation at the back of his neck. Whoo, but there'd have to be a pretty good shine in a minute, he said to himself. This man Palgrave must be taught.

He marched up to Joan and held out his arm. "We may as well get back," he said. "The band's going to begin again."

But Joan sat down, looking from one man to the other. All the woman in her reveled in this rivalry—all that made her long-dead sisters crowd to the arenas, wave to armored knights in deadly combat, lean forward in grandstands to watch the Titanic struggles of Army and Navy, Yale and Harvard, on the football field. Her eyes danced; her lips were parted a little; her young bosom rose and fell.

"And so you see," said Palgrave, putting his hand on the back of her chair, "I can stay as long as the Hosacks will have me, and one day I'll drive you over to my bachelor cottage on the lake. It will interest you."

"The only thing that has any interest at the moment is dancing," said Oldershaw loudly. "By the way, you don't happen to be a member of this club, do you, Mr. Palgrave?"

With consummate impudence Palgrave caught his eye and made a sort of policeman gesture. "Run away, my lad," he said, "run away and amuse yourself." He almost asked for death.

With a thick mutter Oldershaw balanced himself to hit, his face the color of a beet-root—and instantly Joan was on her feet between them with a hand on the boy's chest.

"No murder here," she said. "Please!"

"Murder!" echoed Palgrave, scoffingly.

"Yes, murder. Can't you see that this boy could take you and break you like a dry twig? Let's go back, all three of us. We don't want to become the center of a sight-seeing crowd." And she took the arm of each shaking man and went across the drive to where the car was parked.

AND so the danger-moment was evaded—young Oldershaw warm with pride, Palgrave sullen and angry. They made a trio which had its prototypes all the way back to the beginning of the world.

It did Palgrave no good to crouch ignominiously on the step of the car which Oldershaw drove back hell-for-leather.

The bridge-tables were still occupied. The white lane was still across the sea. Frogs and crickets still continued their noisy rivalry, but it was a different climate out there on the dunes from that of the village with its cloying warmth.

Palgrave went into the house at once with a brief "Thank you." Joan waited while Harry put the car into a garage.

Bed made no appeal. Bridge bored—it required concentration. She would play the game with Gilbert if he was to be found. So the boy had to be disposed of.

"Harry," she said when he joined her, chuckling at having come top dog out of the recent blaze, "you'd better go straight to bed now. We're going to be up early in the morning, you know."

"Just what I was thinking," he answered. "By Jove, you've given me a corking good evening—the best of my young life. You—you certainly are—well, I don't know how to do you justice. I'd have to be a poet." He fumbled for her hand and kissed it a little sheepishly.

They went in. "You're a nice boy, Harry," she said. There was something in his charming simplicity and muscular strength that reminded her of—but she refused to let the name enter her mind.

"I could have broken that chap like a dry twig, too, easy. Who does he think he is?" He would have pawned his life at that moment for the taste of her lips.

She stood at the bottom of the stairs and held out her hand. "Good night, old boy," she said.

And he took it and hurt it. "Good night, Joany," he answered.

But that pet name hurt her more than his eager grasp. It was Marty's own word—Marty who—

SHE threw up her head and stamped her foot and slammed the door of her thoughts. "Who cares?" she said to herself, challenging life and fate. "Come on. Make things move."

She saw Palgrave standing alone in the library, looking at the sea. "You might be Canute," she said, lightly.

His face was curiously white. "I'm off in the morning," he said. "We may as well say good-by now."

"Good-by, then," she answered.

"I can't stay in this cursed place and let you play the fool with me."

"Why should you?"

"There'll be Hosack and the others as well as your new pet."

"That's true."

He caught her suddenly by the arms. "I wish to God I'd never seen you," he said.

She laughed. "Cave-man stuff, eh?"

He let her go. She had the most perfect way of reducing him to ridicule.

"I love you," he said. "I love you. Aren't you going to try, even to try, to love me back?"

"No."

"Not ever?"

"Never." She went up to him and stood straight and slim and bewitching, eye to eye. "If you want me to love you, *make* me. Work for it, move heaven and earth. You can't leave it to me. I don't want to love you. I'm perfectly happy as I am. If you want me, win me—carry me off my feet, and then you shall see what it is to be loved. It's entirely up to you—understand that. I shall fight against it tooth and nail, but I give you leave to do your best. Do you accept the challenge?"

"Yes," he said; and his face cleared and his eyes blazed.

EVERYONE cares, really—as you will see in the next installment of this much-talked-about novel. It will appear in the forthcoming—the September—issue of THE GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE, on sale August 12th.

"Decidedly," he muttered ecstatically, "it needs the Shimmer of Moonlight to complete the string. But how get it?"

The Shimmer of Moonlight

By George Gilbert

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM SCHMEDTGEN

AS the five o'clock siren whistle groaned forth its dismissal, the clangor of the great steel works began to diminish. Karl N. Schradier, arising from his swivel-chair,—seat of authority back of his flat, broad and wide mahogany desk,—went over to the main-office window to watch his men troop out through the big gateway. Thick and tall was he, with immense sweep of torso lines, and legs like sturdy columns under his bulk. His grizzled brown beard and twinkling brown eyes set off a face that men liked to look upon when he was pleased and feared to behold when he was angry. Chief of one of the larger of the minor steel companies inland, he ruled a small industrial principality by sheer might of will, and tolerated no advisers in the direction of the affairs of the Sheltingham Steel and Iron Company.

As the men went their ways to their homes and the accustomed crescendo of business died down to isolated puffings and distant roarings of belated exhausts and chimneys and shafts and pulleys, the chief's private secretary, alert and cool in his flannel suit, stepped softly about the inner sanctum, arranging the last letters to be signed for the day.

Schradier turned as the rustling of the papers on his desk ceased. Striding quickly to his chair, he grasped his pen, glanced at each paper in turn, signed or made notations, dashing off an hour's work in a few moments. Then, shoving the mass of stuff into a basket, he said:

"That is all, Aylshire. You may go."

And Aylshire went, as ordered, as did

everyone who came under the sway of that grim ironmaster.

AS the door closed and the spring lock snapped on the outside, Schradier got up easily and softly. Going to the great safe in the corner of the room, he gave the huge door one tug, and it flew open noiselessly. Reaching inside, Schradier drew out a drawer and carried it to the desk. Seating himself, he thrust his hand into the depths of the drawer and drew out many tiny boxes—and some larger ones. Opening them, he began to spread their beautiful contents before him, snapping on the lights by pressing the desk-switch when he had the boxes' contents in view. When the gleam of the brilliant rays struck on the rich tones of the desk-top there was revealed, clear against the red and brown color-values, the opalescent radiance of many pearls. No setting profaned them. They were loose, laid out singly, in twos, threes, fours, dozens, just as Schradier had cast them forth in idle confusion.

Where other men collected stamps, coins, old masters, Colonial furniture, mere money, grudges, what not, this man of business turned to these gems "of ray serene." And he knew them. Whether they came from the Japan Sea, the Malay Archipelago, the inland rivers of Russia, Arkansas or Missouri, if they were from salt-water shellfish or fresh rivers, creeks or lakes or ponds, he could tell. He aimed not to possess great pearls, the ransom of kings, but to have perfect ones of smaller size, rare-tinted ones, those of elusive qualities of nacre. Odd baroques, lemon pearls, black pearls, quaint slugs, tiny Buddhas covered with mother of pearl, fished up by cunning Chinese who knew the secret of hiding them in pearls and compelling the oysters to coat the images for temple gifts—all these were his. The world's most adroit pearl-dealers knew that he knew pearls and acted accordingly, to their profit and his pleasure.

DREAMILY Schradier lighted a cigarette and toyed with the gems, admiring their hues, fascinated with their blushes or virginity of sheer whiteness.

After a time he began to select from among them all some that graded in size from that of BB shot up to those the size of a sparrow's egg. They were all of a shade, perfect in their uniformity of sheen, shape and distinction. Deftly placing them in a semicircle, Schradier soon had them arranged as if strung for a necklace. But where the center pearl should have been was a vacant space which, had it been occupied according to the gradation of the others, would have been filled in with a pearl of larger size than any of the others.

"Decidedly," he muttered ecstatically, "it needs the Shimmer of Moonlight to complete the string for Myra's wedding gift. No other would do. But how get it?"

If you and I knew the history of the Shimmer of Moonlight, we should not have to guess at much that is hidden in past American history. Never a pearl that monarchs grasp for their crowns, it was still one of those gems that are marked in the lesser annals of precious traffic. It had come up from the Marquesas on a whaler in the '40s and been purchased by a French diplomat in Washington. By him it was disposed of through some backstairs intrigue to a woman of charm and frailty, and by her to one of the great Civil War days' political leaders, and from his estate to a turf-king, and by him to his son, who was a notorious spender of time and money.

It was said of this pearl that aside from its first sale to the Frenchman it had always changed hands as the result of intrigue, cleverness, persuasion, passion—never for much money. With the eclipse of the turf-king's son, trace of it had been lost, although at Schradier's behest the pearl-brokers had sent out S. O. S. calls up and down the primrose path the young man had raced toward the bankruptcy court, hoping that it would somewhere be found and redeemed—for a price plus a fat commission.

A time longer Schradier played with his gauds; then he swept them into their tiny boxes, packed all in the drawer again and placed his spoils in the great safe and locked it; then he donned his coat and hat, threw off the lights and went out to his car, nodding familiarly to the watchmen who were already on guard. And so he went home, content, to his great house, where he kept ponderous state, as a widower, with his only daughter as his solace. It was for her he drove men to his will by thousands—but did them rough justice; and it was for her he piled up his money and his pearls. Of such oddities are the strongest characters formed, like the jigsaw puzzles children play with.

JIMMY THE GOAT, released from the "big stir" up the river, filtered into the throbbing city as the summer dusk was falling. His prison clothes told the policemen what he was, and they eyed him at the clanging doors that swung wide to let the crowd from the train out into the great station, at the street-entrance, at the corners. His prison stubby, coarse shoes, his prison hat, bleak and black, like his poorly fitting suit, marked him for what he was. In his pocket he had the State's five dollars, given to start him on his way up or down, as chance turned the wheel for him.

Jimmy was hungry for the haunts of old, resentful, determined yet not quite decided. The trudge of a few blocks put him across town, where he was nearer the warrens of crime and forgetfulness for such as Jimmy the Goat. He wanted a bigger supply of "coke;" he wanted a little real food; he wanted seclusion from, and inclusion into, certain circles. He was between the impulse for temporary good, such as vicious crooks have, and permanent bad, such as many of them yield to from various causes. Spare, alert, yet young and eager as a ferret, he joyed in the flashing of familiar lighted signs, glaring enticements to eat, drink and be merry. A few more blocks, and he would dodge down an alleyway, up a pair of stairs and down another and announce his homecoming to the old mob. For the time the street was quiet, all but deserted. It was too early for much excitement.

Came now into view down the street a taxi of an old vintage, bumping, puffing, distinctly a carrier of non-notables. As it came opposite Jimmy the Goat, he saw that it stopped. The driver became involved in an argument with the fare, who replied in a fuddled feminine string of expostulations. The driver got down and swung open the cab door. Jimmy the Goat stopped, expectant. If there was to be a fracas, something might come of it—for him.

From the cab emerged a blowsy woman, querulously lifting up her voice in protest.

"No farder," said the captain of the steering-wheel decisively. "I've run up and down and across, and I've got to see some money before the procession moves again."

The big blonde was plainly drunk, but she had her dignity on straight still.

The cabby, scenting failure, became strident in his plaints. Leaning against a pole, Jimmy the Goat watched.

"If you wont take me further, take me back to where we started," commanded the lady loftily.

"And what then?" asked the offended cabby.

"I can get plenty of money then," she shrilled. "I've seen the time I could buy you and sell you—"

"Can the con," barked the cabby.

FROM his detached position Jimmy the Goat waited, amused, alert. There was no danger in the shape of a man in a blue uniform to be seen. Plainly the comedy was to be free—mayhap profitable.

"You get another sucker to take you back," roared the driver.

"I'll walk first."

"If you can," jeered the taxi-man.

"Oh, I can carry more than I got."

"And I can carry less in my car than I brought here," came the nagging reply.

The lady eyed him loftily, then less loftily; and then her ample bosom began to heave, and then she began to sob, going the usual maudlin course from heroics to sniveling idiocy so characteristic of her kind and condition.

"Well, when they begin to weep, they're through," gibed the driver, seeming to sense that the scene was ended without profit.

Jimmy the Goat was beginning to be angry. No action seemed to promise after such a good beginning. Decidedly it was time to interfere. He emerged from the shadow of the pole.

" 'S matter here?" he said keenly.

The cabby comprehended him instantly—all that he was and had been.

"You get out of here," he said, "or I'll call a bull."

"Call and be blowed," said Jimmy the Goat, conscious of his recent immunity-bath in the big stir. "Nothing's against me."

THE big blonde ceased her sobbing. Clearly here was something of advantage. To a lady in her straits, anything was welcome—but the police.

She too, skilled in all the ways of the underworld, sensed what Jimmy the Goat was—and had been and would be. Her mind was soon made up. Her knowledge of the yearnings of returned convicts for the society of women was exact.

She plunged her hand into the folds of her frowsy dress at the bosom, fumbled a moment and then drew out a shiny object. The eyes of Jimmy the Goat gleamed. His instinct had served him well. It was a la vallière—gold, surely, with some sort of gem as a pendant. His ambition did not soar high; he was no top gun of crookdom. Something to possess, to pawn, to turn in for a small bill, was all he asked.

"Pay him and take this," she said. She counted on getting it back soon. She had given it away before—and retrieved it.

Jimmy the Goat clutched the jewel and transferred it deftly to his trousers pocket. Followed a spell of haggling with the driver, now abashed at his own foolishness. The taxi-driver satisfied and gone, Jim turned to the befuddled lady with the peroxide hair and found her waiting, sure, serene again.

"Such an experience for a lady!" she murmured tenderly, making her eyes roll. "And me once the friend of Jim Sharpe, who had a string of fast ponies at Brighton!"

Jim Sharpe and his ponies meant little to Jimmy the Goat. How to escape was his problem—escape without giving the woman the chance to raise a hue and cry or make a scene. The little gold object burned against his nervous leg, together with the change from the five-dollar bill he had received from the taxi-man. Plainly the blonde lady was a nuisance, to be tolerated but left as soon as it was safe. He would be a cheap fall-guy to squire her a moment longer than necessary.

He eyed her appraisingly. For all her dignity there was a quiver to her lips, a shifty expression to her eye, a yellowness to her lids that were unmistakable. He looked again. He was sure.

She was suffering for the lack of something!

"Want a shot o' coke?" he asked.

"Oh, boy," she gurgled, "how did you guess it?"

Jimmy the Goat thrust a lean thumb and a leaner forefinger into his vest pocket and drew out a tiny vial, paid for with three days' work on the prison rope-walk, the produce of which, credited to a crooked guard, had procured him the life-giving white powder he craved in ever-increasing doses. One last precious sifting of it was in the vial. Turning it out skillfully onto the back of his hand, he put his hand within reach of the lady's nose, and she sniffed deeply, taking the powder into her nostrils.

"This is the life," she murmured easily. "Let's eat."

Around the far corner came a man. Back of them sounded the tread of more. The streets of the quarter were waking up. Whatever was to happen must happen soon, and it did.

Whether it was the final sniff of the coke, added to other narcotics, liquids, excitements, incitements or what not, the blonde lady collapsed. When the first of the approaching ones came near, they found an unconscious blonde lady stretched on the sidewalk, and Jimmy the Goat bending over her.

"Lady's fainted," he volunteered. "Had a quarrel with a cabby here, and he put her out. You watch and I'll go to telephone for an ambulance."

With ready sympathy, pedestrians

gathered and stood agog while the nimble Jimmy ran off toward the red-and-green lights that blinked off down the street. Agog, they stood until the policeman on the beat came along, heard their tale, satisfied himself that none of them had had a hand in anything, and himself called the hurry cart; and so the psychopathic ward got another patient who went from it into the long night that is on the other side of the bright lights.

THOUGH Jimmy the Goat was a crook without a tall imagination, it was nimble. Turning two or three corners, hugging walls, sidling along, gliding along, he came to the place he wanted to reach. Then he paused, so that he would be breathing naturally, that Izzy the Fence might not have too much leeway on him when the battle of wits inside began. Izzy, like Jimmy, had no altitude of imagination, and like him he was nimble with what he had. In the back room of his pawnshop, screened from the public, they dickered.

"A solid gold chain and setting," conceded Izzy, fuzzy of hair, black of eye, red of cheeks and rotund and short. "But those imitation pearls are something else again. Sold out of Fifth Avenue, they bring twenty dollars apiece; out of my shop, twenty-five cents yet." His tone was final.

Hugging walls, sidling along, gliding along, Jimmy came to the place he wanted to reach.

"Weigh the setting," snapped Jimmy the Goat, "and figure in this old suit and shoes and hat, and see what I've got left."

After the exchange was made, Jimmy had sundry silver pieces left, a presentable suit and a five-dollar bill again. Freedom from the worst of police inspection, an opportunity to try again for easy money, were his. What did he care for Jim Sharpe and the fat blonde lady? She had given him the jewel for paying the cabby. He had the cabby for a witness, and the number of the car tucked away in his memory-box. She was in a hospital now, where she ought to be. He should *not* worry.

"Well, good-by, Izzy," he said jauntily as he strode out.

And so Jimmy the Goat goes out of the story.

TO Izzy the Fence, early next day, in response to a kite flown out over the highways and byways of high and low confidence and allurement, came Bob the Runner-off, friend of the fences, disposer of valuable things, tall, handsome, well-dressed, affable—fit to approach the victim of a theft who had advertised for a return and no questions asked, fit to dicker with diamond-brokers who did a shady business in holes in the wall below the police deadline, fit to sell an Astor House to a country cousin or a gold-plated slug to a country dry-goods buyer.

Warily they met over the table in the little back room—Bob Brynce's wits against the guile of the other.

"I puts it on the table, and you name your price," said Izzy, casting his pearl before the swine.

No shade of eagerness was in the manner of Bob the Runner. He eyed the gaud steadily.

"I'll give you one hundred bucks," he said.

Shrill expostulations arose from Izzy the Fence.

"It was a good pearl in its day," said Bob in his level voice. "I give you the right of it. It's stained now and dirt is grimed into it. You know a pearl can't be cut over, like a diamond, to get rid of a chipped edge. If it's spoiled, it's spoiled. One side is good. It will make a scarfpin by setting it with the bad side in."

Regretfully eying the undeniable red stain on one side of the pearl, Izzy the Fence haggled again.

"Fifty for the setting?"

"Well, fifty for the setting."

Out came Bob's wallet, and soon he had the la vallière and departed. "Good-by, Mr. Brynce," said Izzy the Fence as his useful friend went. And so Izzy the Fence goes out of the story.

VULPINE in his cunning, outwardly immaculate, well fed, correctly garbed, Bob the Runner-off swung off down the street, twirling his walking-stick, having the appearance of a bored man-about-town looking about for something to stir his jaded senses. In the back of his head plans were gyrating, in process of assimilation, elimination.

Suddenly he turned and made for the main artery of the great city's life, came to it, crossed it and began to thread divers streets. The character of the signs became Oriental.

Into a doorway blazoned with red and gilt Chinese lettering Brynce turned and so came into the tiny shop, where a brave showing of antiques, so called, were spread for the inspection of the unwary. To the smug Celestial who came to wait on him Brynce said certain words, made certain signs. Conducted to the rear of the shop, he was ushered through a door and through a passageway and down a flight of steps and so came to the end of his present quest.

Huddled in a corner, on a divan covered with red cloth, was a great mass of humanity that upheaved itself obesely. There was a reek of stale opium and tobacco in the thick air. Layouts were on the little tables all about the room, each handy to a divan.

Although the great hairy man in the room was clad in a Chinese gown, his face was Occidental. His voice, as he raised it in sonorous greeting, was full of Flemish gutturals, rumbling as a Netherland windmill rumbles beside a canal.

"So early?" he queried. "So early?"

"No smoke now," said Brynce shortly, his gray eyes focusing, his face by just a shade set. "Sit down here by the big layout and let's talk business, Lueberg."

"*Van* Lueberg," insisted the man.

"*Van?* A Dutchman that's half a Chink takes what he gets," sneered the runner-off. "We move in vans in America."

The other growled in his beard, a red beard that was tangled.

"*Van* to me means something yet, if I am here in degradation and lack spirit to arise," he insisted gently.

"Bunk," said Brynce. "Let's talk business."

"Business it is," replied Van Lueberg, his voice now acid.

Slowly Brynce drew out the la vallière.

"Can you make that all alike?" he demanded. "No Chink-Dutch tricks, now! You know me and how far I can reach."

THEN came silence as the Fleming weighed the pearl in his hand, as he looked it over with the eyes of an expert.

"Yes," he said simply, "we will talk business—on your money basis. I can make it all alike and cover the stain. So it shall be sold for a fair sum."

While the runner-off watched, the great fat man, first casting the pearl onto the layout table, began to pad softly about the room. In his movements there was something suggestive of more than obese weariness. His head was hung low. His limbs dragged. From crevices and secret drawers here and there he assembled what he needed—a tiny vial, a blowpipe, a bottle of colorless liquid, pincers. Returning to the table he sat down and leaned over to his work as far as his corpulence would permit. He labored in his breathing, became stertorous—and recovered himself.

"I was in Amsterdam long ago," said he. "There I was the one who handled great pearls."

And now he began to work. Testing the pearl against his forehead, he clasped it with the pincers, set them and arranged the blowpipe. Very gently he warmed the pearl, holding it at a distance from the flame, trying it many times to test its warmth. Finding it to his liking, he uncorked the vial and with a single deft shake dropped one tear from it onto the pearl and turned the pincers quickly so that the gem revolved. Over it spread a pure, pearly nacre that flowed evenly, without a flaw, more pronounced where the red stain was greatest, less on the good side. In a twinkling the pearl was restored and stood out again. It was a marvel of delicate manipulation, especially at the hands of one so gross.

Brynce's eyes glowed greedily. His suavity was gone. He scented good hunting.

"How much?" he snarled.

"If this was a real pearl, not a doctored one, you could afford me much," said the giant calmly. "As it is, I ask nothing."

"Nothing?"

"Still a Van Lueberg, though degraded, can bestow favors. Here is a tip: the pearl I have just doctored for you looks like the Shimmer of Moonlight. The tip and my work are yours free." So saying, he cast the pearl onto the table, whence Brynce plucked it eagerly and as eagerly placed it, with the setting, in his pocket.

"Here," he said, plunging his hand into his trouser pocket, "take this and buy yourself plenty of good dope, the best." He threw down a handful of silver coins and got up quickly.

"I said, nothing," said Van Lueberg, with a magnificent gesture. "I can favors bestow still and have my pay in the satisfaction I shall have."

But he was talking to an empty room.

QUESTING, his ear to the hum of the patter of the crooked pearl-brokers, Brynce got himself up many stairways and elevators that day and down as many. He did not show his pearl. He was seeking information. Into all those avenues of forbidden traffic he went—and out. At several thieves' clearing-houses he dallied, always sought after, always deferred to, always brusque. In the little room of Red Luiz, four stories up and back, around three corners from Maiden Lane, he got track of what he wanted. The far-blown rumors of the Shimmer of Moonlight had come to him oft on his peregrinations. Here was the man who could tell the tale. The little Spaniard, wary, alert, spun the yarn over a box of cigarettes, and here Brynce linked up his plan to the wants of Schradier, iron-and-steel monger and pearl-lover.

The great steel-mills of Sheltingham were throbbing their greatest, the yard-engines were puffing their bravest, the office-force was busiest, when Bob the Runner-off came jauntily in, twirling his stick, flower in buttonhole. He was wondering what trick he could work to enable him to glide through the cordon of sentinels between the outer office and inner one—the one he wished to reach. His card, borne inside a newly monogramed case, read: *"J. Elverton Townley, Pearls."*

Luck seemed with him. He was ushered at once into the presence, his wolfish eyes warily taking in the details of the office, its quiet richness, its order. The big man at the big mahogany desk was busy and did not look up, except to motion him briefly to a seat at the corner of the desk.

"In one moment," boomed Schradier. "You do not mind my working?"

"Take your time," said the assured runner-off.

"NOW, to your business," said Schradier crisply—too crisply, thought Brynce for a second.

"I am told you buy a pearl once in a while," he ventured in even tones. His heart was beating a bit too fast for comfort.

"What have you to offer?"

There was a finality in the tones of this man of business. He had better assume a businesslike air.

The indolence slipped from Brynce's form and face, like a mask. If it was to be a battle of wits, his were ready.

Almost in a flash the pearl lay on the mahogany. Schradier picked it up deftly, holding it to the light critically.

"Not bad, not bad," he said appraisingly.

"It is, as you see, of a certain size," said Brynce steadily.

"Of a certain size," admitted Schradier, "but not of a certain luster."

"But still of a good luster," insisted Brynce politely but hardly.

"Of a certain luster, a good luster—but too even in nacre. Some slight waviness is not a fault."

"Ah!"

"It might pass for—"

A pause—was it to be profit or loss? Brynce shivered inside.

The big gnarled man on the other side of the desk nodded knowingly.

"No questions answered or asked," said Brynce.

"It is understood," said Schradier, even shamefacedly. "It is understood."

"Shall I say five hundred dollars?" queried Brynce.

"There is a resemblance," murmured the big man. A buzzer sounded under the desk. Brynce jerked himself round to face the opening door. But it was only Aylshire, the private secretary, smiling.

"We need a witness to such a big transaction," said Schradier. His air was one of caution.

"He's a goof, after all," thought Brynce.

"Aylshire," said the steel-maker, "I purchase of Mr. Townley a pearl at five hundred dollars. Make him out a check for me to sign."

SO, it was done! Brynce kept himself still until the crisp paper rattled in his hands. The pearl lay on the desk, seemingly unnoticed. On occasions Bob the Runner-off had achieved the price and retrieved the loot as well, but plainly this was not one of those times. The big man before him could reach too far. Bob was a wise crook. "Safety first, if necessary," was his motto. He knew when it was necessary. It was now. Regretfully he arose. As he did so, Schradier came to his feet, lithe as a cat, striding to his side.

"Having done business on a business basis," he said banteringly, picking up a certain blue envelope, "you will indulge me while I read you a little business note I received two days ago, will you not?" The tone was polite; yet somehow there was that in it which precluded refusal. Clearly the big man was boob, but he could be indulged. The game was safe. Aylshire, tapping away at his typewriter in the corner, never paused.

The blue paper rustled from the envelope and was straightened out in Schradier's right hand. He carefully adjusted his glasses with his left.

" 'Consulate General,' " read Schradier, " 'New York.

" 'Sir:

" 'You will be visited soon by a man who will have a pearl to sell, which he will hint, without laying himself liable, is that famous one, the Shimmer of Moonlight, regarding which you have at times made inquiry of me, relying upon my friendship and means of information. I receive this hint from Wolf Van Lueberg, sometime great pearl expert of Amsterdam, Holland, yesterday deceased in Ah Fong's opium-den, Chinatown.' "

Schradier paused. His heavy hand, backed up by tense coils of muscles that had thrown the rolls to forge out immense steel beams when he was an immigrant twenty years before, came down on Brynce's shoulder.

"See how things fall out," he urged, yet with deference. He continued his reading:

" 'Yesterday deceased in Ah Fong's opium-den, Chinatown, where he was found after an appeal for help to me; but the Consulate's chief clerk went, and to him the sick man did impart this information, gained when Brynce's tongue wagged during an opium-debauch in that same den of Ah Fong, where Van Lueberg was on the divan next to Brynce's. Moreover, sir, he said the pearl was a doctored one—' "

"Did I say it was genuine?" snarled Brynce.

"So"—very gently—"your motto is *'Caveat emptor'?*

"Naw, it aint; it's 'Buyers beware.' "

"Yes, so! Business is business, eh? You have my check, I your pearl; it is a deal, eh?"

'I was in Amsterdam long ago," said Van Lueberg. "There I handled great pearls," And now he began to worl
Testing the pearl against his forehead, he clasped it with the pincers, set them and arranged the blowpipe.

Decidedly the man was a fall-guy. Brynce almost yawned. It would soon be over, he thought.

Over in the corner Aylshire's typewriter tapped methodically. They were just business folks. Admiration for the twinkling-eyed big man crept into Brynce's mind. He was a rare sport, after all!

"Sit you down," said Schradier, "and after a time I shall finish reading the letter."

"I'm in a hurry," said Brynce uneasily. Evidently there was more.

But he sat down, nevertheless. Perhaps the pressure of that great hand on his shoulder was the compelling reason.

Quietly Schradier went around to his own side of the desk and seated himself. Opening a drawer, and reaching inside, he produced a tiny file, a minute graver, a pair of dainty forceps, fragile, unique. Bending lovingly over the pearl, he picked it up and looked at it critically. Holding it in the forceps, he began to abrade it carefully, steadily, with the cutting-tools.

"Do you believe in miracles?" he asked, looking suddenly at the bewildered Brynce.

"You do not," he said, answering his own question. "But you shall see one. Behold!"

At a touch the artificial nacre and what seemed like twin flakes of fairy chaff fell from the pearl. Brynce's eyes bulged greedily.

Before them on the mahogany gleamed again the Shimmer of Moonlight! The matchless skill of Schradier had redeemed it, peeling off the stained outer layer, revealing the pearl's purity anew! Hypnotized, Brynce gazed at it while Schradier came around to his side, catlike.

"We continue to read," he said, in a level, colorless voice. "We read what a great artist in pearls, the greatest artist in pearls, has imparted."

Reading, he continued: " 'Moreover, sir, he said the pearl was a doctored one. But in the nacre with which Van Lueberg restored it for him was a drop of that certain bland reagent which alone makes a pearl peel, as an onion is peeled, and if you are as learned in pearls as I judge you are, and as he said you are, you know the inner-temple secret of the Oriental manner of restoring, truly and genuinely, pearls lightly stained with lees of wine, or blood, by taking off one layer.

" 'Truly yours,

" 'Van der Frantzlein.'

" 'Or with blood,' " repeated Schradier simply. "Something tells me you have cast scorn on highborn blood—"

Brynce swallowed spasmodically.

"And there is a postscript—yes, a postscript. Shall I read it?"

Then continuing, his great hand still on the confidence-man's shoulder, he went on:

" 'P. S. When this man comes to you with the pearl and you are at the end, you shall make him say "*Van* Lueberg." The pearl came to him through purchase. You can from him be an innocent purchaser for value. Be sure he says *Van* Lueberg.' "

The immense hand tightened on the broad shoulder of Brynce. He winced; his knees trembled. Tons of iron seemed on him. He bowed; he shuddered; he sank down. The brown eyes, terrible now, gleamed down upon him; the very beard of the giant seemed to crinkle in wrath.

"Say it," he thundered.

"*Van* Lueberg," shrieked Bob the Runner-off.

Instantly he was plucked to his feet and turned with his face toward the door.

"March," blared Schradier, shoving him toward the door.

Brynce marched, the third crook to hold the great pearl and to part with it for almost nothing, through overmuch cunning, leaving it to the shrewd, honest, fair-dealing man of business, following up his fad, to win the prize by being fair—fair and matchlessly skillful.

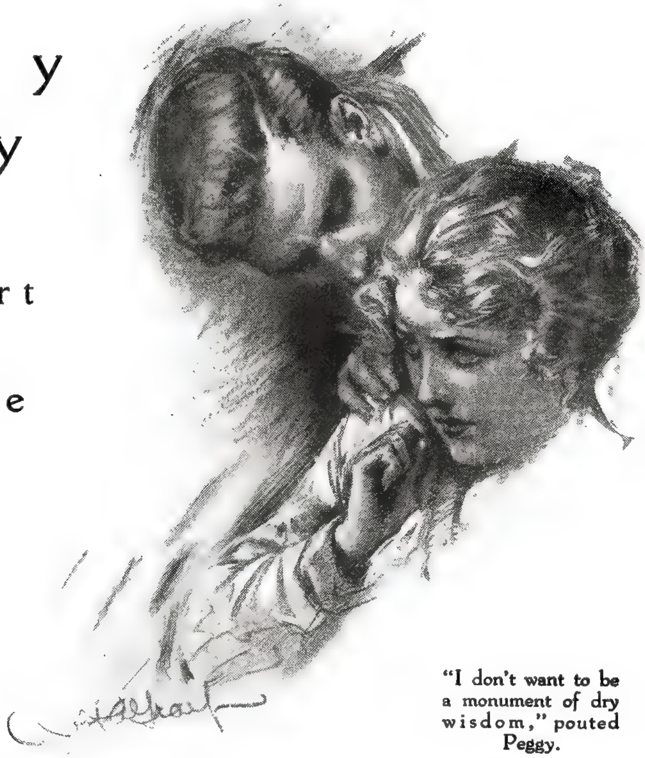
Aylshire never ceased his typewriter's syncopated clatter as Brynce went, save to slip his automatic back into the drawer of his desk.

And so, when Myra Schradier was wedded in June, in the center of her fine necklace of pearls there gleamed, with pale, virginal opalescence—the Shimmer of Moonlight.

Pretty Baby

By Albert Payson Terhune

ILLUSTRATED BY
ROBERT A. GRAEF



"I don't want to be a monument of dry wisdom," pouted Peggy.

SHE was just five feet one in her French heels; as no outsider had seen her without these heels, her net height was a matter of doubt. For the rest, she had a little bit of a face with blue eyes two sizes too large for it, a tumbled aureole of fluffy corn-silk hair, a Dresden shepherdess figure, and cream-of-roses complexion.

The hair and the complexion were indigenous, whatever less gifted women might say. And the big eyes used to do entrancingly queer things, seemingly of their own accord. Taken all in all, Peggy Ferris was preëminently the one woman in all New York's six million population for whom the inspired phrase "Pretty Baby" might have been coined.

Her husband, Wade Ferris, called her "Pretty Baby" far oftener than he called her Peggy. Indeed, it is odd that entire strangers did not hail her in the same endearing fashion, on the principle that makes folk stop to squeal baby-talk at nurse-accompanied pink-and-gold-and-white infants in the street. Peggy was that sort of girl.

On the theory that fluffy hair denotes a fluffy brain—or more likely on no principle at all—Wade Ferris treated his wife as though she were six rather than twenty-six. Sometimes Peggy adored this. Sometimes she hated it.

When grim and hideous Tragedy—in the shape of a cut finger or a candy-headache or a rained-on hat—stalked into her life, it was heavenly to be gathered up in a pair of big arms and held close to a big chest and to be comforted and told how lovely she was and to be called Pretty Baby.

But when she wanted to talk politics or take an active interest in Wade's business affairs (as her favorite feminine uplift author told her she should), it was humiliating to be laughed at and Pretty Babied and treated otherwise as though she were a mental incompetent.

Do you get the idea?

Peggy Ferris, like many an older and uglier woman, wanted merely to be an intermittent Pretty Baby. In the intervals she wanted to be a blend of Mrs. Good Deeds and the Three Learned Vestals of Greece. At such times, Wade's treatment of her aroused much the same mad resentment as might fill the breast of a Supreme Court judge were his bench officers to present him with a Kiddie Kar labeled "For a Good Child."

Of course, the fault was all Wade's. He ought to have known by instinct when to Pretty Baby his wife and when to listen in wondering reverence to her theories on life's problems. But then, if Wade had had the sense to do that, life would have held no problems for him. His superhuman wits would have solved them one after another, as fast as they came along.

LEON KIRBY, of all the men Peggy knew, had the intelligence to see beneath the airy surface down into the wonder-depths of her soul and there to read the latent strength and wisdom that were the *real* Peggy. She knew he could do this—because Leon had told her so himself. This confession at once set him apart from all other men and on a pedestal of his own. He was henceforth that rarest of men—the man who understands. Incidentally, he was Wade Ferris' best friend—at least, Wade was Leon Kirby's best friend. Perhaps this amounts to the same thing, perhaps not.

The climax came one day when Peggy chanced to read a magazine story which thrilled her. Most stories thrilled Peggy, whether they were stupid or stirring. She achieved this thrill by the simple mental process of putting herself in every story-heroine's place.

The yarn that thrilled her on this day and led to the climax dealt with a woman who was not content to be a mere chattel and butterfly, but who taught herself all the details of her husband's business. When that business was at its shakiest, the husband fell ill. On his recovery he went back to the office, expecting to face ruin. And lo! his splendid wife had not only carried his business safely through the financial storm but had started it on an era of unequaled prosperity.

"*I* could do that!" declared Peggy, addressing a fluffily exquisite girl in her mirror. "I *could!*"

She was still aflame with the idea when Wade came home. The woman in the story had gleaned her business knowledge by tactful questioning. Scarce was dinner ended when Peggy's tactful questioning began.

"Wade," she said earnestly as she held the match to her husband's after-dinner cigar, "how much money have you made to-day?"

"Why?" he asked. "Are the bills very terrible?"

"No," she frowned, amazed at his denseness. "I just asked because I wanted—"

"Oh, I guess I've made enough money to-day for anything *you* want, Pretty Baby," he reassured her. "And if I didn't make enough to-day, we'll use some of the money I made on other days. What is it and how much?"

"Will you *never* understand me?" demanded Peggy. "I'm not hinting for a present, and I haven't even overdrawn my month's allowance—at least," she added, spurred on by truth, "not enough to worry about. But a husband and wife are business partners. And I want to know more about my partner's business. How much did you earn to-day?"

A chuckle of real delight from Wade showed that the dull-brained fellow thought she had said something funny. Peggy stamped her foot. At once Wade grew very grave indeed.

"Well," he said, making tedious calculations on his finger-tips, "let's see. Just how much *did* I make? Of course, I can't be certain, down to the last penny. But I'll do my best. As nearly as I can remember, I made, to-day, about one hundred and eleven thousand, eleven hundred and eleven dollars and eleven cents."

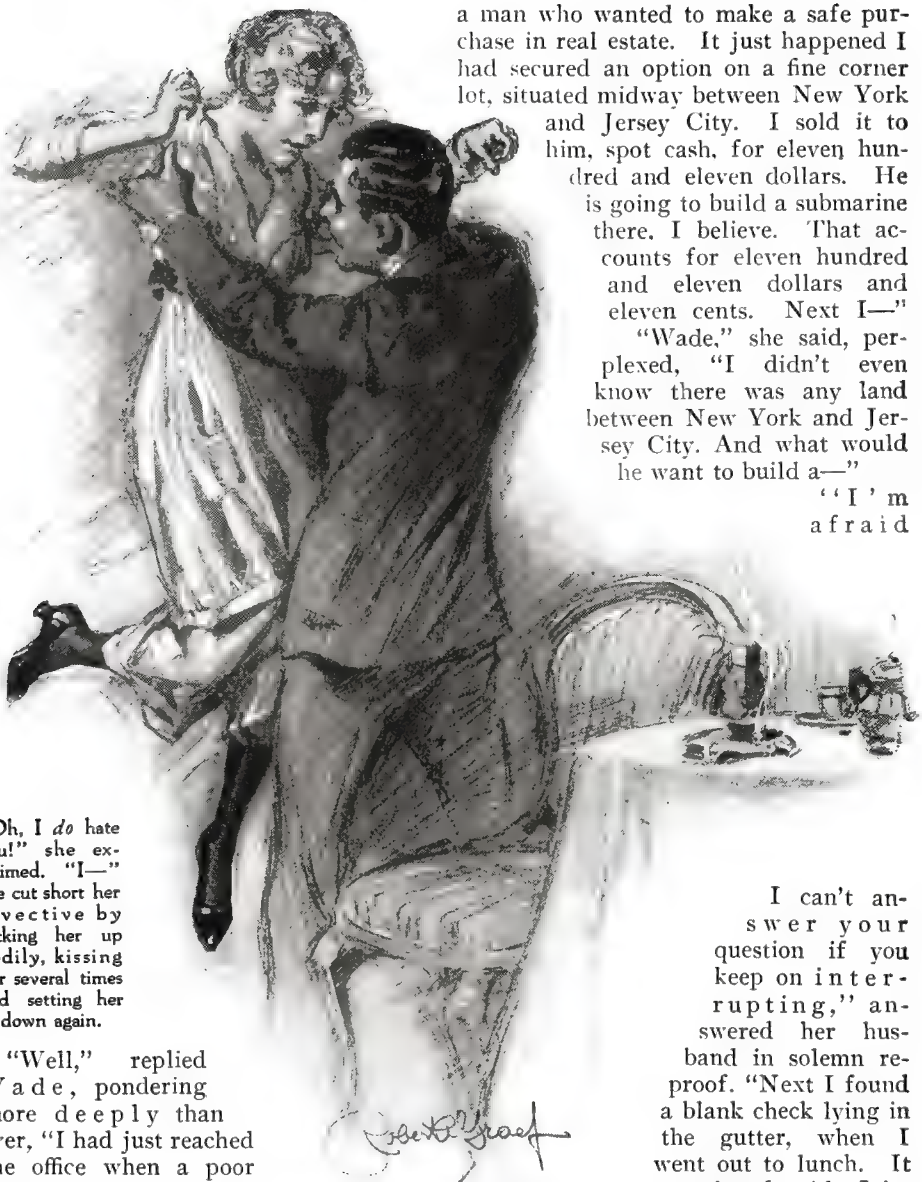
"Whew!" she exclaimed. "Isn't that gorgeous!"

"A fair average day," he admitted.

"I should think so!" she declared.

Then, remembering she was there to learn and not to applaud, she resumed, in keen businesslike alertness:

"How did you earn it? Tell me exactly."



"Oh, I *do* hate you!" she exclaimed. "I—" He cut short her invective by picking her up bodily, kissing her several times and setting her down again.

"Well," replied Wade, pondering more deeply than ever, "I had just reached the office when a poor old woman came in. She wanted to buy some bonds. All the money she had in the world was eleven cents. So I sold her that amount of Union Pacific—at nine A. M. quotations. It was quite a tidy block of bonds. And she went away very happy. I—"

"But Wade," expostulated Peggy, "I didn't think any bonds were so—"

"That was how I earned the eleven cents," proceeded Wade. "Then in came a man who wanted to make a safe purchase in real estate. It just happened I had secured an option on a fine corner lot, situated midway between New York and Jersey City. I sold it to him, spot cash, for eleven hundred and eleven dollars. He is going to build a submarine there, I believe. That accounts for eleven hundred and eleven dollars and eleven cents. Next I—"

"Wade," she said, perplexed, "I didn't even know there was any land between New York and Jersey City. And what would he want to build a—"

"I'm afraid I can't answer your question if you keep on interrupting," answered her husband in solemn reproof. "Next I found a blank check lying in the gutter, when I went out to lunch. It was signed with John D. Rockefeller's name. I suppose he dropped it there and didn't think it was worth picking up. But I took the trouble to pick it up. Every little bit helps, you know. I filled in the amount for one hundred and eleven thousand dollars and cashed it. That makes up the—"

"Wade Ferris!" cried Peggy in a gust of anger, "I don't believe one word you say. You're making fun of me!"

"Heaven forbid!" he disclaimed fervently. "I was just—"

"You were just treating me as if I were a child who had asked you to tell me a story!" she accused. "Oh, I *hate* you!"

He laughed aloud in pure glee at her kittenlike fury.

"Pretty Baby!" he shouted. "Oh, Pretty Baby! You're delicious!"

HE caught her fluffy head between his hands and kissed the tip of her tip-tilted nose. Peggy tore free from him, white with wrath.

"You brute!" she stormed. "You treat me as if I were a baby! You seem to think I'm a fool, who isn't fit to be talked to seriously. Here I try to show an interest in your work and be a real helpmeet to you. And you—oh, *stop* laughing in that asinine way! *Stop* it!"

Her voice choked with tears. At this change, Wade choked back his laughter and was all contrition.

"Oh, Baby!" he soothed her. "Pretty Baby! I didn't mean to tease you. Honestly, I didn't. But it was so funny to hear you trying to be a grown-up business woman. Don't you bother your fly-away head over stupid business, kid. I'll attend to that end of the partnership. All *you* have to do is to be pretty and have a good time. That's your share of the firm's work."

"That's no partnership!" she flamed. "That is the way women live in a harem."

"There are worse ways of living," he told her. "I never heard or read of a harem wife's being discontented—unless she happened to be in love with some other man. Then her gentle husband generally ties her in a sack and throws her into the Bosporus. That's the only real advantage American women have over Turkish. There's a law, here, against tying them in sacks. Instead, they—"

"Oh, what's the use talking to you!" wailed Peggy. "You simply wont take me seriously! Why can't you let me share your business troubles and your office cares and be a real wife like—like women in stories? I'm sick of being a doll. Can't you see that?"

He laughed again, very kindly yet very annoyingly, and tried to stroke her hair. She pulled away.

"I've asked for bread, and you've given me a stone!" she sputtered. "Most women would be glad enough to spend your money without caring to know anything about the business that earned it. Most of them would yawn their silly heads off if you even tried to talk business to them. You ought to be grateful for a wife who is able to discuss serious things with you. All you want is to pet me and play I'm a baby. I'm not. I'm a woman—as much a woman as *Nora*, in 'A Doll's House.' Be careful you don't drive me to follow her example!"

"Let's see," mused Wade. "What *was* her example, anyhow? She was 'Pretty Baby' too, as well as I remember—till her husband caught her forging a check or something. And then, when he forgave her, didn't she say he was a stranger to her and pass out into the night? The only time I saw the play, it was so exciting that I slept through the middle part of it. So I'm not quite sure. But—"

"There are other ways to show a husband he doesn't understand his wife than passing out into the night," said Peggy darkly.

Now, here, Wade should have begged her, frantically, to tell him just what she meant by such a strange speech. Instead, he took it as a joke. Before she could press the point, he got to his feet and looked at his watch.

"There's a governors' meeting at the Bond Club at nine," said he. "I must be off. Don't bother to sit up for me, in case I'm delayed. By-by, kid."

"I'm not a kid!" she snapped. "And some day I'll show you I'm not! You wait and see!"

"You look like an Angora kitten, when you frown," he commented approvingly. "I'd like to tie a pink satin bow around your neck and—"

"Oh, I *do* hate you!" she exclaimed. "I—"

He cut short her invective by picking her up bodily, kissing her several times and setting her down again. While she was in midair she tried ragingly to kick his shins. But she only tangled her toes in her petticoat-edge and tore a yard of its lace.

WHEN Wade was gone, Peggy allowed herself the luxury of a good cry. She felt desolate—miserable, horribly ill-used and misunderstood. She had tried so hard to make Wade treat her as a wife should be treated! And his affectionate tolerance drove her frantic.

Out of the ruck of emotions gradually crystallized one resolve: Wade thought she was a child. She would show him she was a woman—not only a woman, but as shrewdly capable and businesslike as the woman whose story she had that day read.

When she should at last have proven herself a true financier and a business success, — but not until then, — she would go to Wade with proofs of her prowess. And then, wouldn't he be ashamed of himself for using the detestable name "Pretty Baby" to such a paragon?

All of which, in a way, was a line of thought parallel to that of the spanked boy who vows to run away to sea and to return to his awed and remorseful parents in later years as a highly successful pirate or trust-magnate or something. But it was also something more than that. Peggy Ferris' father had, in his day, been one of the most astute men in his own branch of finance; so had her grandfather. And in her hour of stress heredity was stirring and snarling and shoving.

How she was to win this great business triumph of hers Peggy did not at all know. But her allowance was ample, and she had money of her own besides, left her by her father. So the question of capital did not worry her. All that remained was to figure out a wise way to invest that capital. She could lay her pretty fingers on six or seven thousand dollars at a week's notice. But what could she do with it, to win freedom from the Pretty Baby yoke?

PEGGY was still revolving the puzzle in her angry mind when Leon Kirby's name was brought in. Leon Kirby himself followed. At a glance he saw his hostess' look of trouble. And he mentally attuned himself to it. But before he could make any of the conversational leads that suggested themselves to his ready mind, Peggy scattered all his ideas by asking abruptly:

"What business did you do to-day?"

"I—I don't understand," he stammered.

"You don't need to," said Peggy. "It is a test. I have asked the same question once before this evening. I want to see if all men give the same answer to such a question. If it is impertinent of me to ask it—"

"Nothing you can ask is impertinent, dear lady," Kirby interposed. "My affairs are yours—so far as you'll consent to make them so."

He had a queer intuitive sense concerning women, had Kirby. And this intuition now led him to answer her question categorically and with truth.

"I got to the office at nine," he said. "I looked over my mail and dictated answers to some letters in it. Then I went to court. The case of Rogers *vs.* Kellogg was on the calendar for to-day. Our firm represents the Rogers interests, you know. But the hearing was adjourned. So I went back to the office. I spent the rest of the morning trying to straighten out the affairs of one of our women clients—a woman who thought she would go into business awhile ago. She rented and fitted up a bijou little lunch-room and tea-room. Then, just as she was ready to open it, her mother died in Italy, and she dumped the whole transaction onto our hands while she took the first boat for Naples. Her mother leaves so much money that the tea-room project is abandoned, and we have to close it out. Then I—"

"Wait!" broke in Peggy excitedly.

She had at first listened with placid joy to his recital. It was as balm to her scratched spirit, after Wade's scoffing. But at the tale of the tea-room, inspiration smote her.

"Wait!" she commanded. "Tell me more about the tea-room. Where is it?"

Wondering, he obeyed. In equal wonder he answered a volley of questions that trod close on one another's heels, all of them anent the tea-room. By the time the last question was answered, Peggy Ferris' inspiration had hardened into resolution.

"I can afford that," she said at last.

"Afford what?" asked the puzzled Kirby.

"The tea-room, of course," said Peggy, "or the lunch-room, or whatever you choose to call it. And there is money in such places, if they are run rightly."

"What on earth are you talking about?" he queried. "I don't under—"

"About the tea-room you're trying to get rid of, of course," she replied. "What else should I be talking about? There are all sorts of money in that kind of place. I know there are."

"But—"

"All sorts of money," she reiterated, "if it's run rightly. I know, because I know how little money there is in such a place when it's run the wrong way."

"I don't—"

"But *I* do. Girls who want careers and haven't sense enough to stay at home start tea-rooms. So do sad-souled widows with need of making a living. They wheedle their friends into going to eat there. In that way they convert perfectly good friends into dyspeptic and steadily dwindling customers. They fit up the place like an *art nouveau* nightmare, and they serve weak tea and dry cake and burnt toast and criminal preserves. They sell the stuff at prices that would stagger Rothschild; and on the side they peddle horrible gift-shop stuff. Then they wonder why they go broke. Now, I'm going to do just the opposite thing. I'm—"

"But do you really mean you're going to—"

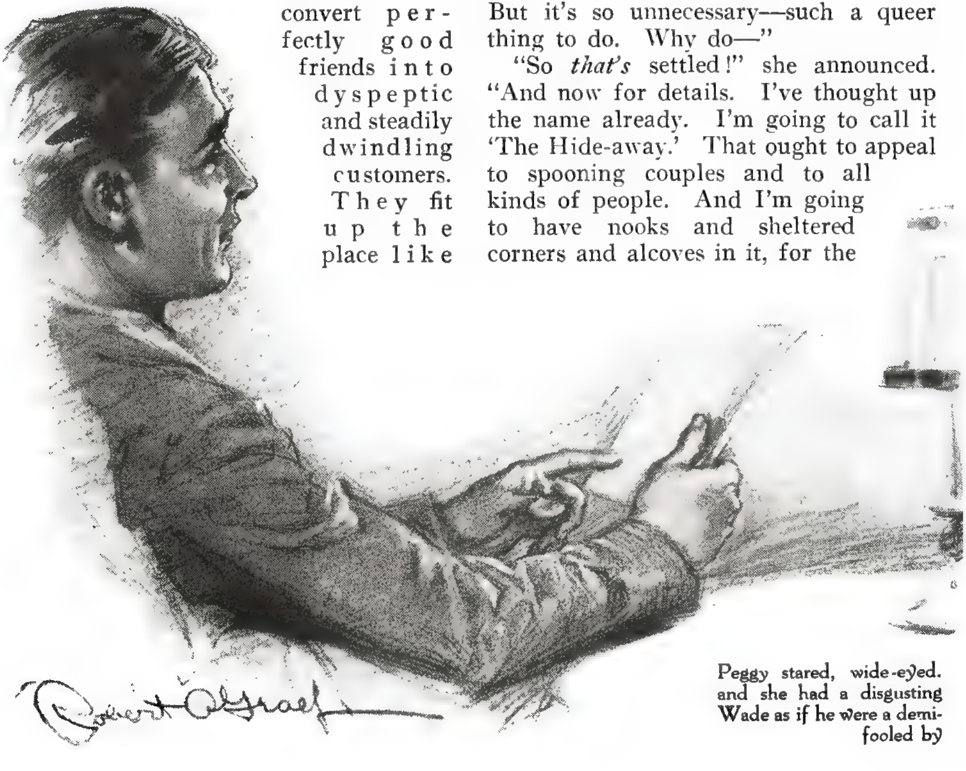
"To open a place where people will go because everything to eat and drink is better than they can find it anywhere else. People don't mind paying big prices. All they mind is paying such prices for stuff they wouldn't feed to a relation-in-law. Will you arrange it all for me, Leon? And—oh, I forgot to tell you—Wade isn't to know a thing about it, not till it is a bonanza. Promise not to tell him."

"But why should you—"

"Never mind why—perhaps because I don't need to, perhaps because I do. Wont you let it go at that—and help me?"

"Help you!" he cried. "I ask nothing better in life than to help you, Peggy. But it's so unnecessary—such a queer thing to do. Why do—"

"So *that's* settled!" she announced. "And now for details. I've thought up the name already. I'm going to call it 'The Hide-away.' That ought to appeal to spooning couples and to all kinds of people. And I'm going to have nooks and sheltered corners and alcoves in it, for the



Peggy stared, wide-eyed.
and she had a disgusting
Wade as if he were a demi-
fooled by

tables to hide away in. You said there's a yard too, didn't you? I'll put tables there in summer, with umbrella awnings. And—"

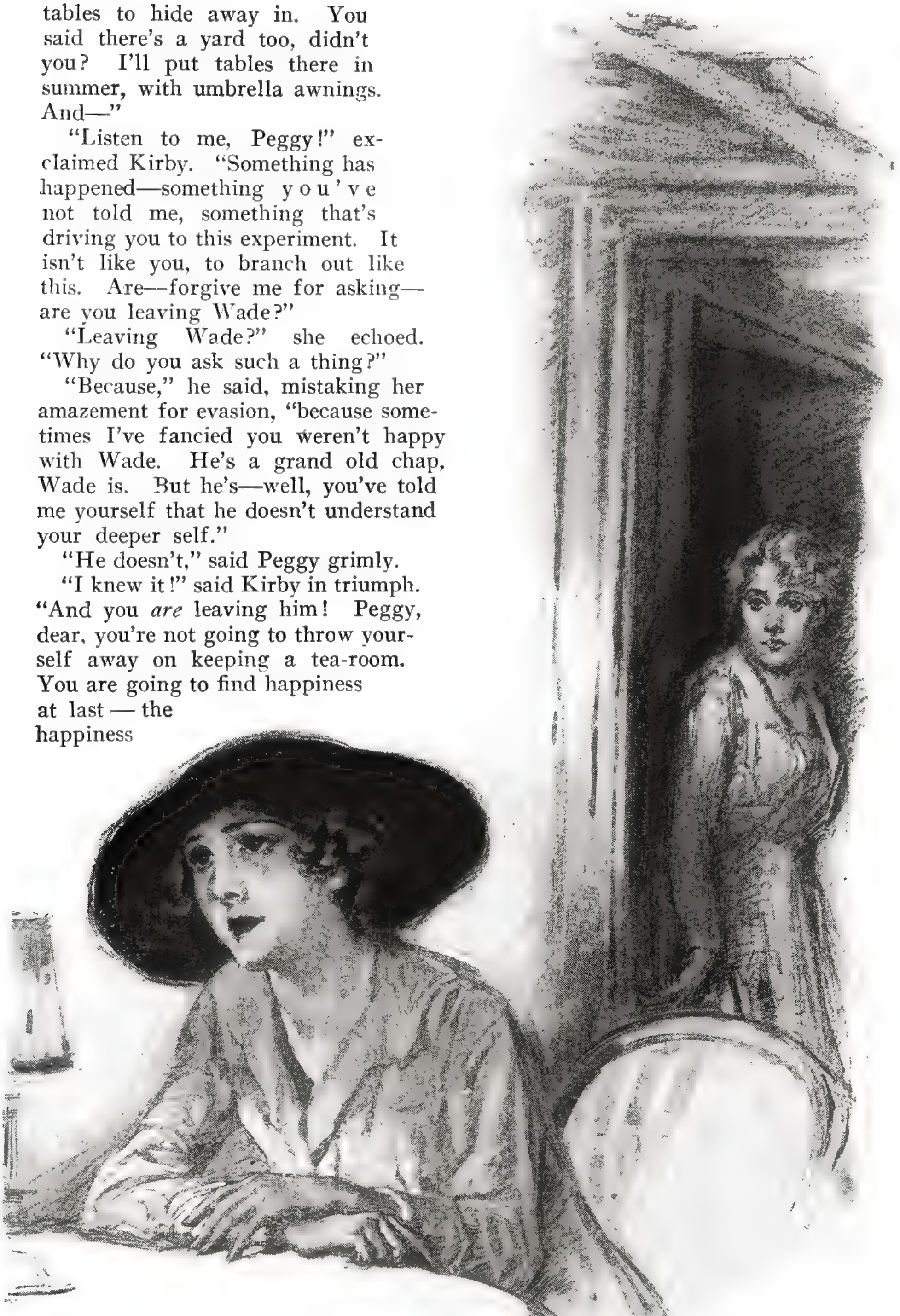
"Listen to me, Peggy!" exclaimed Kirby. "Something has happened—something you've not told me, something that's driving you to this experiment. It isn't like you, to branch out like this. Are—forgive me for asking—are you leaving Wade?"

"Leaving Wade?" she echoed. "Why do you ask such a thing?"

"Because," he said, mistaking her amazement for evasion, "because sometimes I've fancied you weren't happy with Wade. He's a grand old chap, Wade is. But he's—well, you've told me yourself that he doesn't understand your deeper self."

"He doesn't," said Peggy grimly.

"I knew it!" said Kirby in triumph. "And you *are* leaving him! Peggy, dear, you're not going to throw yourself away on keeping a tea-room. You are going to find happiness at last — the happiness



. . . . The girl was indisputably pretty; way of looking up, through veiled eyes, at god. To think any sane man should be such a trick!

that comes to a woman from a man who is her soul-mate. Sweetheart, you must know what you are to me. I—"

"I never stopped to think or to care what I might or might not be to you," returned Peggy very pleasantly indeed. "Not because I'm a saint,—I'm not,—but because you don't interest me at all—not in that way. And you've called me Peggy three times, this last five minutes. My memory is pretty fair, but I can't remember ever asking you to call me that. And now"—without even so much as a pause for breath—"sha'n't we go on with our plans for the tea-room? My old colored mammy is a wonderful cook. I think I'll put her in charge of the kitchen. And I'll have my waitresses wear Colonial costumes."

THE HIDE-AWAY TEA-ROOM hid itself away in a side-street off Broadway, just opposite the stage-entrance of the Olympia Theater. But it did not hide away so successfully as to prevent more and more people from finding it, as the first months of its existence crept on. It was a delightful nook, tucked off as it was in a handy backwater of the city's current. The soft-shaded lights, the quaintly dainty furnishings, the secluded table-nooks—all had a distinct charm of their own.

But New Yorkers do not care to feed upon mere charm, and at the Hide-away they were not forced to. The food was delicious—almost good enough to warrant its somewhat steep prices.

Actresses and chorus-girls from the Olympia, across the street, took to running over to the Hide-away for lunch, during rehearsals and on matinée days. Sometimes they were alone—in which case they ate frugally. Oftener they were with men—and then their orders were gratifyingly lavish. Men and women, too, from business offices near by, began to drop in for lunch or for tea.

Peggy herself superintended everything, usually remaining at the Hide-away from ten in the morning until after five. To her guests—chiefly to the swarm of theatrical girls—she chose to be known as Madame Aimée. By luck, none of her acquaintances chanced to see her there—none, at least, except Leon Kirby. Leon dropped in at least once a day. He had much perseverance.

There were a hundred business details wherein he could be of great use to her, in the management of the Hide-away. For, ardent and resourceful as she was, in the enterprise, she was woefully lacking in the matter of practical training. Yet through all his love for her Kirby was amazed at her natural aptitude for business and at her quickness in grasping its essentials.

Which brings our story to a day when Peggy emerged from the Hide-away's kitchen at about one P. M. and stood at the service door of the little restaurant to survey the battle-field.

Here, twice or thrice a day, Peggy was wont to stand, inspecting her guests and inwardly thrilling at their ever-increasing numbers.

To-day, as Peggy's big eyes slowly swept the tables, she noted with pride that only one of them was empty.

Even as Peggy stood there, a man and a girl came into the room. A Colonial-clad head waitress piloted them through the soft half-light to the vacant table. As they walked thither, the man's back was toward Peggy. She noted something familiar about it. As was her custom when anyone who might know her came into the Hide-away, Peggy shrank back a step into the shadows of the passageway that led to the kitchen. The man sat down, facing the passageway.

And then Peggy knew that she had all along known he was Wade Ferris.

SHE put her hands behind her, palms flat against the wall. And she stared, wide-eyed. She was not doing any thinking at all. Then she looked at the girl.

The girl was as tiny as herself, and evidently was some years younger. Also she was indisputably pretty; and she had a disgusting way of looking up, through veiled eyes, at Wade as if he were a demigod. To think any sane man should be fooled by such a trick! Yet Wade was patently delighted by it.

Peggy waylaid the waitress who bore the errant couple's lunch-order to the kitchen. Snatching the slip from its bearer, she glanced over it.

"If he's ordered cocktails or—or anything at all to drink," she told herself with chill ferocity, "I wont let them have it! I—oh, dear! I wish Leon were here to tell me if I've a legal right to send for a policeman and have them thrown out."

Yearningly Peggy revolved this tempting scheme. Then, with a sigh of reluctance, she abandoned it. She was by no means certain the trespass law could be stretched to cover the case. Moreover, a guest-ejecting policeman would not add to the cozy tranquillity of the Hideaway. She read the order Wade had scribbled:

"Two half-cantaloupes, two portions of broiled chicken, candied sweet potatoes, tomato surprise, French pancakes with jelly, fruit salad, iced coffee with two extra orders of cream, fresh strawberry ice-cream, bonbons."

That was all. Nothing to drink but the cream-ridden iced coffee—not even a liqueur! Peggy's artistic soul shuddered as she read the awesomely messy and oversweet combination.

"He—he doesn't even know how to order a luncheon!" she mused accusingly. "One would think he were ordering for a kindergarten child. It's just a gastronomic way of saying 'Pretty Baby!' "

AT this point word came in hot haste that a waitress had fainted in the kitchen. By the time Peggy had revived her and had straightened out the panicky confusion among the other waitresses and returned to her point of vantage, Wade and his convoy were passing out into the street.

But they left behind them a heartbreak which took the form of wholesome wrath. All afternoon Peggy nursed her rage. And as the hours went on, it waxed hotter and fiercer. Wade had petted and babied her, from the day they had become engaged. He had sworn to her, over and over, with needless vehemence, that she had spoiled him for every other woman. He had even ignored tacit invitations, from girl friends of hers, to flirt ever so mildly with them.

And all the time he had—he had—Why, no wonder he wouldn't flirt with her chums! As well expect an absinthe-swigger to dally with chocolate ice-cream soda or with sarsaparilla!

After a day with this creature and with others like her, he had shamelessly come home to his lawful wife and had soothed his diseased conscience by calling her Pretty Baby!

Pretty Baby, forsooth! That was all he considered her. And she had been so happy and proud in the hope that she could one day convince him she was a successful business woman! She, whom he neglected for girls who ate sickeningly sugary luncheons!

In the rebound, Peggy's thoughts flew to Leon Kirby. In a lightning-flare of inspiration she saw the difference between the two men. She had given Wade everything. And Wade had not only treated her as a child but had deceived her. She had given Kirby nothing. And Kirby not only saw how wise and womanly and competent she was, but he choked back his all-consuming love, lest it offend or annoy her. Why, Leon Kirby was of the stuff whereof Round-Table knights had once been made!

The comparison—goaded on by anger—brought its inevitable sequel. Wade had broken her heart. And it was not on the free list to break Peggy's heart—as Wade should speedily learn. Leon Kirby adored her. Better, still, he understood her. He regarded her as a superwoman, to be revered—not as a child, to be babied. He alone understood her. And the girl's resolve was taken—the illogical, resentful, furious feminine resolve that is responsible for more marriages, more divorces and more remarriages than any one other cause.

AT five o'clock Leon Kirby sauntered into the tea-room—and into the hands of Fate.

It was a very alert, set-lipped, bright-eyed Peggy Ferris who met him almost without a word and led him to the little cubby-hole she used for an office.

"Leon," she said, businesslike and brisk, "five months ago you said you loved me. Was it true or did you say it to make conversation?"

"Does the priest kneel before the

Host, to flex his knee-muscles or to worship his God?" replied Kirby, hope surging wildly in his heart and well-nigh strangling him.

"Good!" she assented in that same impersonal and quick manner. "I asked, because I wanted to make sure. I *am* sure. I *was* sure. But I didn't want to make any more mistakes. I made my first mistake when I married Wade Ferris. I made my second mistake when I let him hoodwink me. I didn't want to make a third mistake, now that I am leaving him."

"Leaving him!" gasped Kirby. "*Leaving* him? Do you mean it?"

"It isn't my idea of a joke," she reproved. "Of course I mean it. I am going to divorce him. Please don't ask questions. I don't want to talk about it, any more than I can help, just yet. But I'll need your help in getting my divorce. And when I have gotten it—well, if you still care for me—"

"Still care!" he echoed. "Peggy, you're all this world to me—and heaven and hell besides. '*If* I still care!' Why—"

"You're none of those things to me," she told him with numbing frankness. "But at least you'll understand me. And that will be sweet, after—after—"

"I'll *make* you love me!" he prophesied, his face alight. "Love like mine *can't* go unanswered."

He caught her hands and looked down into her flushed face with stark worship.

So infinitely pretty and appealing and childlike was she that Kirby lost hold of his careful repression. With a cry of rapture he seized her in his arms, burying his face in the fragrant wonder of her hair and murmuring ecstatically, over and over again:

"Oh, Pretty Baby! *Pretty* Baby!"

A pliant if unresponsive woman had yielded to his embrace. A wildcat in dainty human form ripped free from it. Wheeling about and smoothing her tumbled hair, Peggy crossed the room to the hook where hung her hat and jacket. She skewered the hat viciously into place on her head.

Amazed, but still unaware that he had thrown away his chances with both hands, Kirby eagerly followed her across the office. Peggy whirled on her suitor, menacing him with a hat-pin.

Simultaneously, she began to talk.

BEFORE she went home Peggy took a fast four-mile walk. And during that walk she did the hardest thinking of her whole life. The net result of all that hour's cogitation was summed up in the last two sentences she had spoken to Kirby:

"If I've got to be cursed with 'Pretty Baby,' I'd rather be called it by a man I love than by a man I don't. And if Wade is a married man making love to a single woman, is he any worse than you—a single man who is making love to a married woman?"

Peggy did not reach home until dinner-time. Wade was waiting for her. Before she could say one of the thirty scathing speeches she had rehearsed, he began:

"I tried for a solid half-hour to get you on the phone, this noon. Dear old Rumrill came into the office, trailing that fool kid daughter of his. She's on a vacation from the Morristown convent. He was called out to Chicago in a rush. So he wanted me to take her to lunch and put her on the Morristown train. I tried to get you to come along, to ease the agony. But you were out. She steered me to a measly little joint where some other convent-girls go when they're in town. And she ordered a lunch that would make a sugar factory look like a salt mine. Ugh!"

"A measly little joint?" quavered Peggy.

But Wade Ferris did not hear.

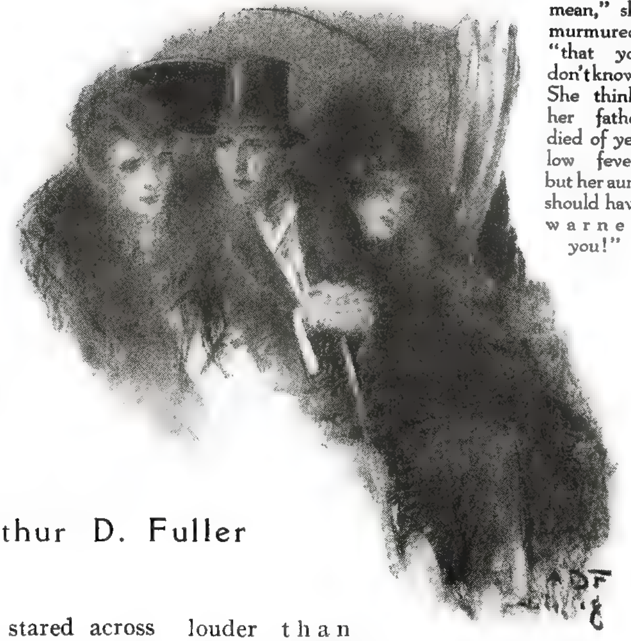
"I've had enough sweets to last me a century, and enough baby talk to last me a lifetime. You used to kick because I babied you. Well, sit down and we'll talk high finance and politics. It'll be a relief. And it'll get the sticky sweet taste out of my memory. Compared with that babbling kid, you are a monument of dry wisdom."

"I don't want to be a monument of dry wisdom," pouted Peggy, her soul athrob with joyous reaction as she nestled against him. "And what's more, I wont be a monument of dry wisdom. I—I want to—to be—Pretty Baby!"

The Pit That He Digged

By ETHEL WATTS MUMFORD

Illustrated by Arthur D. Fuller



"Do you mean," she murmured, "that you don't know? She thinks her father died of yellow fever; but her aunt should have warned you!"

KEN PAULSON stared across the table. With a strange feeling of the irrevocable, he realized that this was the Other Woman. A sidelong glance at his wife revealed her, dainty and delicate in every line and in every shade of her pale coloring. He noted with annoyance the pout of her almost childish lips as they closed over the straw in her lemonade-glass. Then his eyes, under their heavy, unmoving lids, slid back to the vivid face of his vis-à-vis. Her gaze was fixed amusedly on his, as if she heard the pounding of his heart, sensed the biting tingle of his nerves and was mocking him.

The color mounted to his face, came creeping toward his tightly curled red hair. To hide his confusion, he lifted the highball glass and gulped its contents. Then he leaned forward on his elbows, contemplating his hands—hands at once nervous and unresponsive, their lines deeply etched and darkly red. Conscious of the observation of the woman opposite, he closed his fists, suddenly withdrew his arms and, leaning back in the bent-wood restaurant chair, thrust both hands protectingly into his pockets. He had the crafty man's knowledge that his naked fingers spoke louder than his masklike countenance.

"Nickey!" It was his wife's clear voice that spoke. "Leave Bobby and come over here by me. It's an age since we were together, and I'm just hungry for gossip."

Nicaise Morley rose, her tall, slim figure a gracious silhouette against the white woodwork of the wall, and crossed behind McMonigal's chair to the vacant seat Doris Paulson had drawn over from an unoccupied table. There she subsided with an easy uncoiling movement. Immediately the two women became absorbed in low-voiced, intimate talk. Paulson, McMonigal and Markham were abandoned to the affairs of men—McMonigal and Markham, that is, for Paulson sat silent; he was usually silent.

Paulson's curiously direct, uncompromising mind, faced the situation squarely. He intended to have this woman, his wife's friend. He had no doubt at all of his ability to interest her, to hold her, to bind her to him. He had a way with women. As for his wife, he had no qualm or question. As long as she did not make trouble, she was free to go on existing. If she made herself a convenience, so much the better. Meanwhile, until he should have burned his passion into her brain and heart, Nicaise Morley must be kept within sight, within touching-distance. Doris should invite her to the house at once—at the close of the present visit that had brought this tempting danger from the South. Doris' voice raised in high-pitched laughter grated on his nerves. It came over him with a sense of shock that she bored him—had, in fact, bored him for months.

He turned toward her, setting his huge shoulders sidewise against the back of the chair that creaked to his weight. He looked at her coldly, analytically. Why, he asked himself frankly, had he married her? First, the appeal of her almost nunlike, ethereal loveliness—he had desired to "humanize" it. Then too, he had wanted a wife, tractable, easily molded, weak—in short, one unlearned in the vices of his chosen world. He had wanted a wife with no immediate family ties to complicate his plan of life. Doris was an orphan, without brothers or sisters. Her fortune was unquestionably hers without let or hindrance. The aunt who had brought her up was no dependent but a shrewd New Englander who was rumored to be more than "well fixed." Paulson admitted frankly to himself that all the obvious conditions had been fulfilled in his selection of Doris. He had wanted her not of his world, and she was not of his world; but therefore she bored him. That had been an oversight. He had broken her to his harness; she was bitted and trained. Yet it had needed only the sight of the unruly vitality, the unbroken pride, independent, attacking mind and the daring beauty of a stranger to breed hatred of colorless, obedient purity.

Yes, he decided, Doris would have to get out, even if she was as complacent as need be, as blind and deaf to his foibles as he had made her. He couldn't be bothered having her around. Her presence in the future must inevitably annoy him. He must send her back to her aunt at once—no, he needed her for bait for the Other Woman, the real woman, to bring her within his grasp. Doris would have to be put up with until his desire had closed upon its object.

McMONIGAL'S heavy laugh broke in upon his concentration.

"Hey, Ken, can't you stop gazing at your *Frau?* Lord, you're a constant lover! There's the waiter, and this round is on me."

Paulson, having readjusted his point of view to suit the new twist of fate, turned back both physically and mentally to the table and became affable. With a word caught on the fly he deftly broke up the talk between the two women, and conversation became general. By a simple maneuver he placed Doris between the men and settled himself beside Nickey Morley. Without a word, without a glance, relying on the nameless emanation of personal magnetism, he set himself to attract her—and found her dynamic force the equal of his own. She seemed to be studying him, weighing him, as she talked, talked sense with consummate frankness.

The party broke up at the door of the road-house, where their cars drew up, and farewells were exchanged.

"Doris," said Paulson as he tucked the robes about his wife's feet, "why don't you ask Miss Morley to come to you after she leaves the Hendersons? I may have to go to Chicago for a couple of weeks, and it would be nice for you to have some one. some one you like, with you."

Doris beamed. "Nickey," she called, crawling halfway over the back of the seat like an eager child, "call me up in the morning. I want to talk with you; and I want you to plan to come and stay with me. Ken's going away."

"I'd love to come," the girl called back as the roar of the car drowned her voice.

Settling back in the seat, Doris began a rapid patter of reminiscences. Nickey and she had been to school together in New Orleans, years ago. After the yellow fever had orphaned her, and Aunt Ernestine, her mother's sister, had sent for the child to come North, Nicaise—that was her real name, because she was born in Nice—had passed from her life until accident had brought them together

Unaware of the passion that enveloped her like a burning garment,—which in this case consumed him and not the wearer,—
Nickey danced and laughed her way with unconscious freedom.

in New York. Since then, whenever Nickey came to the city, they had renewed the friendship. Nickey was such a queer girl, so defiant and independent. She'd even gone to Europe quite alone, and traveled for a year. And there wasn't anything she didn't know. She was wonderful.

Doris talked in italics, with curious inflections and the ghost of a lisp. Even while he greedily listened to the matter of her monologue, Paulson loathed the mannerisms that clothed the information.

As the car drew up in front of the wide veranda of his country home, a strange sense of contentment, of physical well-being, invaded Ken. It was as if he saw in the doorway, not his wife's girlish figure, but the vital, almost powerful body of the Other Woman, and her vivid, compelling face. Doris had never fitted the richness of the house; he felt it suddenly, just as he had realized in a flash that she bored him. Well, it would not be long.

Two weeks slipped by, punctuated by several gatherings, where the lovely Louisianian appeared only to deepen the impression she had made.

AT last, amid a mighty clatter of childish glee from Doris, Nickey arrived for the promised visit. Two days before, Ken had announced that as the principals in the deal he had in view had decided to meet in New York, his trip to Chicago was indefinitely postponed. When the guest arrived, he apologized for his presence with a show of regret that was intended to lure an expression of pleasure. It elicited only a laugh.

That intrigued Paulson. He meant the girl to believe that for her he was prepared to wreck any plan, invent any lie; but he did not mean her to be amused. In point of fact, Nicaise Morley was unaware of the subterfuge, and had she realized it, would have packed her bag at once and departed in scorn. But this was beyond Paulson's guessing. His power over women had never once met the buckler of indifference. His devotion she interpreted as the assiduities of a host. His veiled innuendoes and his outspoken admiration she received frankly as an expression of kindliness toward his wife's friend. Against his will, Paulson had deceived her as thoroughly as he had the large majority of those who thought they knew him, and believed him to be "a good-enough sort."

The beginning of Paulson's fortune, his marriage when almost a youth to an elderly and infatuated woman of wealth, had long ago been forgotten, particularly as the lady did not long survive; and the widower, having cashed in on all of his wife's holdings, had left the Western city of his birth, traveled extensively in Europe and with a set of New York acquaintances acquired abroad returned to America to make the metropolis his home.

There was nothing in his heavy-set but athletic figure, or his handsome Napoleonic face, to indicate the cunning and cruelty of his nature—nothing but his hands, and few observed them.

Unaware of the passion that enveloped her like the burning garment of Nessus,—which in this case consumed him and not the wearer,—Nickey danced and laughed her way through the days with unconscious freedom. Even the evil of his touch, because she was unresponsive, left her unnoticing. As his familiarities increased, she met them with increasing gayety and friendliness.

Paulson was not used to such women. That she did not resent, meant to him that she knew and acquiesced. In all her freedom and frankness he read abandon. In the exaggeration of her speech, he read invitation. Yet brutal as he was, he toyed with his desire, enjoying what he imagined to be the electric understanding between them, unwilling to declare his passion in words, until he felt he had exasperated her by his silence, never for once guessing that he lived in a world of delusion of his own making.

During this period he almost tolerated his wife. She added piquancy to the situation. Her obvious blindness to the affair, her immediate response to any suggestion, amused him. Her enjoyment of the night-life he stage-managed for their guest's entertainment was a new development; hitherto he had sedulously kept her away from cabarets, public dances, all-night "clubs" and the like. The limit of Doris' dissipations had been tea or dinner at a road-house, supper after the theater at Sherry's or Delmonico's. But Paulson visualized Nicaise, the vital, the unconventional, queening it in the surroundings he himself reveled in.

Therefore for the first two weeks of Nicaise's stay the Paulson motorcar stood till morning in front of plate-glass entrances, of pleasure-palaces where drawn blinds and closed doors hinted at closing-time, but from the upper windows of which strains of wild music met the chill air of dawn.

Then, though it was only mid-October, the Paulsons opened the city house to be nearer the center of gayety. Nickey enjoyed it all. Her indefatigable vitality kept pace with every tax placed upon it. She was as keen and brilliant at gray daybreak as the others had been at dinner-time. Before Doris, who drank quarts of lemonade every night as she stared in wonder at the passing show of Broadway all-nighters, Nicaise maintained a temperance diet as rigid as her hostess. But aside, she tasted strange drinks Paulson mixed for her, remarking at their variety and potency. She talked freely to him of the excellence of the fizzes of "the Stag," the perfection of the New Orleans country-club juleps, the marvels of Antoine's "pink ladies." Before Doris she never mentioned having tasted one.

Paulson grinned to himself at this sign of duplicity.

Above Doris' schoolgirl kisses, Nicaise managed an appealing look at Ken, who gave back the look with one of promise.

As Nicaise's visit drew to a close, she frankly lamented the necessity for departure and as frankly begged to be invited again and soon. It was arranged that when she journeyed on for her Christmas shopping she was to come directly to Doris. She said "Doris"—but Paulson fancied that she looked at him.

They had sat long that last night at "Pauline's Little Club;" several of his friends had joined them. Doris was pale,—tired, she owned,—but unwilling to break up the party. It was Mrs. Henderson who ordered the waiter to pour a glass of champagne for her.

"I do believe I will," said Doris. "Will it wake me up?"

"Wake you up?" said Mrs. Henderson. "Try it and see."

Nicaise had been absorbed in conversation with her host when her attention was diverted to the other end of the table. Doris held the slender glass and sniffed the bubbles, wrinkling her pretty nose as they pricked and stung. Nicaise's face turned suddenly white; even her crimson lips paled.

"No," she gasped. "Doris, *don't* take that!"

Doris set down the glass, her innocent eyes open wide. "Why?" she asked. "She said it would wake me up."

"Wake you up!" Nickey's voice trembled. "Come, you don't want to wake up; you want to go to bed. And so do I; I'm all in. Ken, get our wraps, please."

Paulson looked at her, hesitated—and obeyed. Doris put down the glass untouched, yawned like an unmannerly kitten and rose from the table. Mrs. Henderson looked puzzled, but said

Her eye fell on the whisky-decanter and lighted with a look of infantile greediness. It was pitiful and ghastly. Even Paulson's dead conscience turned in its grave as Doris, the once delicate and dainty, snatched up the decanter.

nothing, while the others bade the party adieu with an absent eye on tables where other acquaintances appeared not to waver in their terpsichorean allegiance until egg-and-bacon time.

Doris was so tired that with a mumbled excuse she cuddled in the corner of the limousine and fell asleep as instantly as a baby.

"What did you do that for?" Ken whispered, leaning so close to Nicaise that his lips were almost on her bare neck.

She drew a quick breath. "You saw? Don't you understand?"

"No. Why did you act that way? Why did you turn as white as chalk? What's the answer?"

"Don't you *know?*" she asked, again in a tone of bewilderment.

"Know what?" he came back. "Why shouldn't Doris have a glass of champagne if she wants it?"

She twisted toward him. In the gleam of the street-lights her face was sharply defined and lost again in flashes of darkness. She was very beautiful.

"Do you mean to tell me," she murmured, "that you don't know? Didn't her aunt ever tell you? Doris, of course, has no idea. She thinks her father died of yellow fever; but her aunt, she should have warned you!"

"Warned me?" he repeated. "I don't understand."

Nicaise seemed stunned. There was a moment's silence.

"Promise me, promise me,"—the girl's voice was warm and intense,—"that you'll never tell Doris, and swear to me you'll never let her drink again—will you?"

"I'll promise you anything," he answered. The accent was on the "you," but she did not notice.

She lowered her voice to an even more intimate whisper, drawing him toward her with strong, excited hands. "Her father died in the insane asylum from drink, her father's father too, her uncle. All on that side of the house have gone that way—dipsomania, you understand, in the worst form. It's in her blood. Never, never, on any pretext, even if the doctor should prescribe it, let her taste liquor. I suppose her aunt was ashamed to tell you, and she relied on the temperance bringing up she'd given her. But to-night—to-night, she would have drunk that champagne if I hadn't stopped her. She's seen everybody drink things of late, and she's lost her aversion, and her idea that it's a sin and that decent women never touch liquor. I—I thought, of course, that you knew the danger and were looking out for her. You saw how careful I was never to let her see me even sip a thing stronger than her own lemonade. . . . . I hope, I hope," she added after a little pause, "it's all right that I told you. You understand, don't you?" she pleaded.

Paulson's brain was seething. He believed he understood. She was giving him the key to freedom—to freedom and herself. If this were the case! His ingrained cunning and love of the underhand gloated. This woman, this magnificent woman, saw too, as he would see—saw and placed the weapon in his hand as cunningly, as innocently, it seemed, as he himself would have managed it in her place. In the darkness his hand sought hers and held it. Her fingers closed over his in a quick clasp.

"You *promise?*" she whispered.

"I promise to see to it. Thank you for telling me. We understand each other."

At parting, the following day, Nicaise found occasion to speak of the matter again. With meaning in his eyes, he again assured her that he understood. Above Doris' schoolgirl kisses, Nicaise managed an appealing look at Ken, who gave back the look with one of promise.

WITH the going of the guest, the hectic life of the Paulsons did not slack. They still made part of every riotous party of their acquaintances. Three days after Nicaise had gone, Doris took her first glass of champagne from her husband's hand. She sputtered and did not like the taste. He insisted, and she drained her glass. A week later Paulson took her home from supper at Pauline's Little Club, drunk.

Horrified at herself, for a week Doris did not appear at the cabarets. Ken laughed at her, told her to forget it, and at home insisted on cocktails and champagne with his dinner, with highballs in the evening. At the Loughborros, Doris drank highballs, and played a bridge game that made the others laugh uproariously. From the quiet, demure child she became suddenly glittering, with unexpected flashes of wit and daring that merged soon into incoherence. Two or three friends, surprised and anxious over the change, spoke to Kenneth. He accepted their interference in good part, explained that he was annoyed but thought it best to remonstrate quietly rather than forbid her outright to touch stimulants.

So rapid was the progress of the disease that, like a tiger that had tasted blood, the craving leaped full grown in Doris' predisposed system. Then with a great show of pain and reproval Kenneth forbade his wife to touch a drop. But he left temptation ever before her. The well-stocked cellaret was not locked. Then came a day when the cellaret was emptied and the supplies destroyed, and the servants received orders not to provide intoxicants.

In four short months Doris, the delicate and unsmirched, was a drunkard; and now, driven by the craving and no longer able to obtain it in her home, where she might lie unobserved, denying herself to her callers with the excuse of indisposition, she was forced to betray herself in the open. She had ample money of her own.

Paulson, apparently at his wits' end, consulted everyone; and everybody was very sorry for Paulson. He employed a companion for Doris; but Doris, her passion thwarted, abused the woman so roundly that she left. A trained nurse fared no better after an attack almost of delirium had been mastered. A week at a sanitarium, and Doris escaped—and was gone ten days, to be found at last semiconscious in a cheap hotel-room that reeked of alcohol.

KEN forgave her and took her home. Everybody admired "poor old Ken." Gradually a change came over the character of Doris' excesses. As her system absorbed the poison more and more, and as her frantic mind strove to master the antics of her tongue and body, a sort of lucid madness resulted. Hours of which the following day she could remember nothing, could be passed in the open, and no one not intimately conversant with her nature and personality would have guessed her actual condition. The subconscious mind managed to put coherence in her sentences, to direct her movements. Her face no longer assumed a congested color; rather it was white, with a curious toxic whiteness. She could "get away with it." Doris went down without a struggle. Her recoveries left her so dazed that she had no time between sprees to realize her danger.

Ken, who was very busy these days, saw comparatively little of his wife. At the various hotels she had been known to frequent he left orders that she was not to be served. His chauffeur had directions to keep away from such places. He knew perfectly well that the monster within her could be trusted to find a way to elude every effort at restraint.

In despair, so he informed his friends, he made application to have her committed, but failed to prove a sufficient case.

A week later he had the evidence that entitled him to a divorce. There could be no defense. There was none. He was free.

ALL this while the woman of his desire was in the Argentine, on a six-months trip. He could have written her had he so willed; the frequent post-cards sent to Doris passed through his hands. But he did not. When she returned, he would meet her—he would meet her a free man, blameless, even admired for his forbearance, his kindness and long-suffering. That Doris' physical needs might not prey upon the future, he had played the final card of magnanimity. He had secured her a trust-fund that would provide for her necessities and had legally tied up her own fortune so that she could not waste the principal. Her will left everything to him. In her condition it was more than doubtful if she could ever change it.

When he should meet Nicaise Morley, she would understand. All obstacles had been removed. They would be married. At thought of her Paulson's passion gripped and wrung him like the hand of a giant.

But Doris, in a lucid interval, had cabled a frightened call for help; and Nicaise, filled with a nameless dread of what that twisted, incoherent message might portend, had begun her journey north just as the divorce-proceedings had been instituted.

The reassuring cable from Havana, *"I'm coming at once,"* never reached Doris. It was delivered to Ken. It was he who met her on the pier. She grasped his hand eagerly, her face strained and questioning.

"What's the trouble, Ken? Where's Doris?"

His fingers shook as they closed over her gloved hands. This was the moment he had waited for—this of the telling. His eyes sought hers.

This time even her innocent blindness could not mistake their meaning. His voice was thick as he answered:

"There is no trouble—now. Doris is—out of it. Come, the car is here waiting for you, Nicaise."

She was stunned, utterly confused. Her mind seemed full of scraps that formed no known thing—the confused fragments of a wreck after an explosion. A horrible sense of impending revelation gripped her. She must know, and quickly. She submitted to his care of her baggage, his calm assumption of protectorate, anxious only for the moment when, alone in the limousine, and headed toward her hotel, she might get at the truth of whatever disaster had befallen.

SHE had not long to wait; money expedites matters; and Paulson was as anxious as she for the slam of the car door that should shut them into seclusion. They faced each other at last, she chalk-white and tight-lipped, he controlled but quivering with emotion.

"What has happened to Doris?" Nicaise demanded. "I received a wild message from her, a threat to kill herself. I came at once. Where is she?"

He leaned close to her. "Doris is out of it, I told you—divorced." He paused to let his words sink in, and was surprised at her shocked amazement.

"Divorced!" she exclaimed.

"What did you expect? It was inevitable, wasn't it?" His voice was full of intimate suggestion.

"Inevitable?" Her tone was blank.

He laughed. "Well, it couldn't go on, could it? And when a woman drinks like that,—all the time, never sober, you know,—sooner or later a pretty woman like Doris is bound to get into trouble, isn't she?"

Still the girl remained blind to the implied inclusion of herself. "Doris—drink! How was it? You were warned—I told you. Couldn't you prevent it somehow? Oh, poor Doris! Oh, poor, poor child!"

Something in the genuine horror and pity of her tone angered him. For the successful "woman in the case" she was carrying the game rather far.

"What did you expect?" he repeated.

"That you'd guard her, keep her, watch over her," she flamed.

As usual he misinterpreted her agitation. "Well, nobody has anything against *me,"* he reassured her. "I did forbid it. I sent her to a cure. I had a companion for her. I took her back when she went off on a bat and was gone nearly two weeks—you can ask anyone. There'll never be a word said against me. And when I marry again,"—he looked at her with devouring eyes,—"when *we're* married, they'll say: 'God bless 'em!' " He laughed shakily.

"We? Marry!" The words stumbled from Nickey's lips.

"Soon," he whispered. "Ah, how I wish we were in your sitting-room at the hotel, instead of this infernal glass cage! I'd—kiss the color back to your face!"

The threatening wave of revelation broke over her; she knew.

"So you saw to it?" she demanded.

"Didn't I promise you?" he questioned. "Didn't you show me the way?" he continued.

"I? Oh, my God!"

HIS face purpled with anger. "What's the big idea?" he demanded. "Why this play-acting now? We understand each other. We're free."

She wrenched from him. "You, you, what *are* you?" she gasped. "A devil, a blind devil! And you dare accuse me—*me*—of—of—" She could not finish her sentence, but shrank back in the corner, hating him with her eyes.

It was his turn to be stunned. That Nicaise warned him of Doris' danger for the sole purpose of protecting Dôris had never once entered his head.

"Don't play innocence," he snarled. "You wanted me to get rid of her, and you showed me the way to do it and keep us both clear. Deny it all you please; *I* knew, and *you* know that I knew. Why this pretense? There's no danger. Investigation will only show that she was an hereditary dipsomaniac, and that I didn't know it. Her aunt never breathed a word; she'll have to own to that. Who's to know *you* told me?"

Nicaise broke down completely. "I told you, good heavens! *I* told you—you, a scheming devil, wanting to get rid of her! It's my fault! Somehow it's my fault. What shall I do—what shall I do?"

The car had turned into the avenue at a familiar street and headed northward. Within a block or two loomed the hotel of her destination. She turned on him fiercely.

"I've got to find her—I've *got* to save her somehow. I brought this on her, through you. I'll never rest till I find her. And you!" Her face seemed chiseled of marble, but her eyes blazed. "Let me tell you something. You may have worse yet on your soul. You don't know all you've done. The Langfords, all of them, have homicidal mania when delirium gets them, and Doris' father murdered her mother—yes, stabbed her to death. *Now*—you understand. I've got to find her; *you* have got to find her if you don't want blood on your hands!"

The car had swung to the curb. The uniformed chasseur had his hand on the knob. She thrust past Paulson, motioned the servant to secure her hand-baggage and passed quickly into the hotel.

PAULSON did not attempt to follow her. He needed to think, to readjust. In his luxurious sitting-room he paced the floor, all that afternoon, all that night. He did not even enter his bedroom or modify his dress. As always, he faced things squarely. He had made the one colossal blunder of his life. Not that he regretted Doris' destruction. He was through with her anyhow, and therefore well rid of her by whatever means; even if in her madness she did become involved in some drunken brawl, no blame could be fastened on him. But on the other hand, his stripped pride, his vanity, smarted and cringed. The woman he desired above everything else was not his and never would be.

Worn out, he dozed in his chair, where his Japanese servant found him when he brought the morning paper. His first glance was for the Personal column. He was sure that through that medium Nicaise would try to reach Doris. It would be her first practical thought.

Will Do. communicate with Nickey
back from Argentina, at the Waldorf.

Without a doubt his wife would answer the call, would go to her, and Nicaise would see the wreck of what once had been Doris. In spite of his cold-blooded indifference, he winced. There were memories of Doris—dainty, girlish, delicately beautiful Doris—when she had been an ugly sight to look upon; and he did not care to recall that débâcle. Repeatedly that day he tried to communicate with Nicaise—over the telephone, and she hung up the receiver; at the door of her suite, and it was slammed in his face; at last by letter, with a request for an answer. An answer did come. "If I get in touch with your wife,"—the last two words were savagely underscored,—"I shall let you know by telephone at your house. I will give you the opportunity to help her, if it becomes necessary, but if it can be avoided, I will see it through alone. In any event I will inform you as to Doris' condition."

With that he had to be content. But he waited for the sound of her voice, long hours alone.

At about six o'clock she called him. Her voice was agitated.

"I promised to let you know," she said abruptly. "She called me at the hotel. I located her boarding-place, but she had already gone. I couldn't get her to promise to come to me. She was"—the voice became more constrained—"not herself. But I shall follow and trace her—"

"You had better let me go with you," he interrupted.

"If I need you, I shall not hesitate to make use of you,"—her voice was ice-edged,—"but I hardly think it necessary."

"Where are you now?" he begged. The click of the hung-up receiver closed the message.

ALREADY it was the third evening after Nicaise's return. He realized it, as he ate his solitary dinner. Then he sought the window-seat of his own den, on the fourth floor of the house, from whence he looked down to the glittering, ice-covered pavements. He preferred this room; it held nothing of Doris. She had seldom dared intrude into his privacy. Presently he crossed to the massive center-table, drew a note-pad and pencil toward him and began jotting down notes. He must have Nicaise followed. A competent detective must be put on her trail. If it led him to Doris, no matter. He thought of the company whose services he had employed in securing the divorce, and decided it the part of wisdom to go elsewhere. Then, he decided, he would close the house and sell it, furnished, if possible. Nicaise must learn to know him as distinct from Doris' environment.

The country-house must be disposed of also. He must be absolutely free to follow the quarry wherever she went. He cursed himself for his clumsiness. He should never have confessed his complicity in Doris' downfall, not even when he was convinced of the hideous partnership he had believed to exist between himself and Nicaise. And as things had turned out, it was all but fatal to his future. If necessary,—he looked the situation over calmly,—if Nicaise insisted, he would even take Doris back temporarily and try to reform her. It couldn't be done, but he might make Nicaise believe that he had repentantly attempted the impossible. It might keep her near; he might win her after the inevitable end. Doris couldn't last. Already her frail physique was breaking.

He was very tired. He had not slept for two nights. He determined to calm his strained nerves and take a long rest. He poured himself a high-ball and returned to his place in the window. But his weariness caught him unawares, and he slept, his head resting against the closed-back inner shutter, his body twisted into the entrance of the narrow window-seat.

A gentle tittering, like the laughter of a playing child, woke Paulson. He opened his eyes with a start; but the room was silent, and he thought he had been dreaming. The clock on the mantel struck one. He was cramped; the room was hot and stuffy. He stretched his powerful body, threw up the window and breathed three long inhalations. It came again, that chuckling, twittering laugh. He started back into the room, and stopped with an oath. Before him stood Doris—her clothes just a little awry, her face a trifle whiter than its normal pallor; but her eyes were brilliant, hard and opaque as cabochon cat's-eyes. In her hand she held a latchkey.

"I really didn't know *where* to go, Ken," she said, still with that insane giggle, "till I remembered I had my latchkey. Then I came right here. I thought I'd find you in the den. Say—do you know there's somebody after me? Yes, there is," she insisted, "and I'm tired of being followed. It makes me nervous."

PAULSON drew back from the woman who had been his wife. His mind worked coolly. What should he do? What was the best play for him to make, considering Nicaise? Call the Jap to take care of her, and leave her sole occupant of the house? Then he remembered that his servant had left after dinner not to return till the following afternoon. No, he decided; he would call Nicaise and beg her to come at once. He half rose from the seat. On the table was the telephone-switch. She seemed to divine his purpose.

"Oh, you want to tell them to come and get me!" she tittered. "Well, you sha'n't!"

"Nicaise Morley's here; she wants to see you," he said placatingly.

"I know it," she shrilled. "You got it framed to send me off somewhere. Oh, yes—I know. Everywhere I go, I hear she's been after me, asking for me. Well, she'll never think to come *here*." She laughed her strange twittering giggle. "I got her fooled. Gee! I'm tired." Her eye fell on the whisky-decanter and siphon on the table, and lighted with a look of infantile greediness. "Mind if I take a little drink?"

It was pitiful and ghastly. Even Paulson's dead conscience turned in its grave as Doris, the once delicate and dainty, snatched up the decanter and ravenously upturned it to her lips.

"Stop," he ejaculated.

For answer she launched the heavy glass bottle at his head. So sudden and violent was the movement that he failed to ward off the blow.

It struck him down, as an ox is felled. He rose, staggering, blood pouring into his eyes. What was it he had heard? "Homicidal mania!" He wiped away the blood and dizzily faced about.

By the table stood Doris, in her hand the sleek steel Japanese dagger he was wont to use as a paper-cutter. She seemed to have forgotten him, fascinated by the wavy, lustrous pear-skin grain of the metal. He could see its fine sparkle as the light caught the turning blade. Without warning panic seized him—unreasoning hot terror, that tore his vitals, stopped his heart and blinded his brain. Yet he strove for control.

A voice broke the silence. Some one was running in the hall. The door was flung open, and Nicaise stumbled gasping across the threshold.

"Doris! Doris! Come, come with me," she panted. "I followed. Thank God, you didn't fasten the hall door. Oh, thank God, I've found you!"

She came forward without hesitation. Only the table was between the two women. Doris raised her eyes from the contemplation of the knife.

"I'll teach you to follow me!" she croaked in a dry whisper. She sprang around the corner of the table with the quickness of a cat.

Nicaise, with a sharp cry of terror, thrust a heavy chair before her.

But Paulson had instantly steadied. In a bound he was beside Doris, his heavy right hand closed over his wife's slender wrist in a bone-breaking clasp, as with his left he wrung the dagger from her paralyzed fingers. Then came blackness. He staggered; his foot caught in the rug. The chair slid on the polished floor, and his heavy body pitched forward with the full momentum of his swift action, full on the sheathless blade.

In the breathless silence that followed, Doris tittered.

"Look at Ken; he's dead drunk," she said.

WHEN Doris awoke, it was late in the afternoon. Her head was throbbing, her mind a blank. In utter amazement she gazed on the face of Nicaise Morley.

"Nickey," she moaned feebly. "Nickey—when did you come?" She looked about her blankly.

"You're at my hotel, with me," said Nicaise, smiling. "I ran across you just outside Jo's café last night, so I took you around the Park in a taxi to steady up and brought you here. You came as quietly as a lamb. No one would have guessed."

Doris looked grateful. "Isn't it awful, Nickey?" she pleaded childishly. "I don't remember a thing. I don't remember yesterday at all. Oh, Nickey, what's going to become of me!"

Nicaise crossed to the bed; very gently but very firmly she took the hot, dry hand that twisted the counterpane.

"You are going to a sanitarium in the hills, Doris, and I'm going with you. I sha'n't leave you, not until you are yourself again. You are to ask no more questions—just rest. We leave to-night. I'll attend to everything. Go to sleep now, dear. There is nothing to worry about."

Kenneth Paulson's death remains to-day a mystery to all the world—save to one woman.

The Consolidated Milliners

By Elliott Flower

ILLUSTRATED BY
QUIN HALL

A NEAT, tailor-made, businesslike young woman entered the millinery shop — sometimes called emporium—of Mrs. Imogene Parlan during a dull hour, of which there were many in this particular emporium, and introduced herself as Miss Clara Budd, secretary to Alonzo J. Relling, than whom there was no more prominent and successful lawyer in the progressive little city of Kenbridge.

Mrs. Parlan, a breezy little woman somewhat addicted to slang, immediately jumped to the very natural conclusion that Miss Budd desired to become a credit customer, and she was annoyed. She already had plenty of credit customers and not nearly enough cash customers. She needed a few of the kind that lay down their money when they call for the goods. Her credit customers, for the most part, were perfectly good, but also for the most part they were painfully slow. It was Mrs. Parlan's opinion, based on experience, that a millinery-bill is the very last that a woman pays—unless she has need of another hat. Then she pays for the old one and charges the new one, and so the milliner still continues to "carry" her on the books.

That Miss Budd desired credit was a fair assumption from the fact that she mentioned her business-connection with Alonzo J. Relling, as there would be no need of mentioning him otherwise. A secretary to so prominent and prosperous a man as Alonzo J. Relling would naturally be a good credit risk. That is, she would be able to pay, and undoubtedly would pay, but there was no assurance that she would not take her own time about paying. Indeed, the very fact that she came to Mrs. Parlan at a time when her employer's daughter, Miss Esther Relling, was opening a millinery-shop with a big flourish of newspaper trumpets was an excellent indication that she was not planning to pay promptly. If she were, she would naturally go to Miss Relling's new shop; if not, Miss Relling's new shop would be the very last place that she would go.

No wonder Mrs. Parlan was annoyed. Miss Relling, having a wealthy father, had no right to be entering the business world in competition with those who had to make their living in it. Her social position would give her the cream of the business, leaving to others only the cheaper cash business and the slow-pay credit business. Even the slow-pay people would probably go to the aristocratic shop when they had any real money to spend. So Mrs. Parlan did not welcome Miss Budd with any great display of cordiality. A shabby shopgirl with no more than a two-dollar bill to spend would be a preferable customer.

But it quickly developed that Miss Budd was not seeking credit—was not even seeking millinery. She merely came with a message from her employer—a message based upon some investigations that she had previously made, although she did not mention that.

"Mr. Relling," she explained after introducing herself, "would like to see you on a little matter of business, if you can spare the time."

"Me!" exclaimed the astonished milliner. "See me! What's the joke?"

"There is no joke," Miss Budd assured her.

"But what business would he have with me?" persisted Mrs. Parlan.

"He will explain that himself," replied Miss Budd. "It is of a confidential nature, and I can do no more than assure you that it will be to your financial advantage to see him."

"Wants me to show his homemade milliner how to trim hats perhaps," remarked Mrs. Parlan sarcastically.

"Hardly," smiled Miss Budd. "It is possible," she added, "just possible, you know, that he doesn't want his daughter trimming hats."

"No more do I," returned Mrs. Parlan; "but he aint expecting me to put the curb on, is he? Why don't he do it himself?"

"Ask him," advised Miss Budd. "I have a taxi waiting."

Mrs. Parlan made up her mind quickly. She was mystified, but she could see no reason why she should not find out what Alonzo J. Relling wanted of her. As she was involved in no lawsuit, there was nothing in the request to disturb her, anyway.

"Maggie," she called to a girl in the workroom back of the showroom, "watch the shop! I'll be back in an hour, if any silly person asks. That's my limit," she explained to Miss Budd.

"An hour will be enough," Miss Budd assured her. "Mr. Relling is unhurried but not slow. I doubt if he'll detain you longer than fifteen minutes."

MRS. PARLAN, if she had paused to reflect after her interview with Mr. Relling, would have discovered that Miss Budd had exactly described him—unhurried but not slow. But Mrs. Parlan's mind was busy with other things when that interview was over.

Mr. Relling was a little man with a large head, and he had acquired the habit, probably from his court practice, of thinking on his feet. Whenever he faced a perplexing problem, he instinctively got on his feet, if not already standing, clasped his hands behind his back and paced the floor as he pondered the problem and formulated his conclusions. He had a long, narrow private office that gave excellent opportunity for this pedestrianism, and if dictating to his stenographer or explaining to some one else, he talked as he walked, being irritatingly deliberate in both walk and talk. One was constantly tempted to hurry him, but that was never wise. The unhurried man may—usually does—seem slow, but measured by results, he may be—usually is—quicker than the voluble and hasty man He disposes of the problem sooner.

It was so with Mr. Relling, although Mrs. Parlan's interruptions prolonged as a dialogue what would have been a monologue with most others.

Having given her a chair, Mr. Relling clasped his hands behind his back and began his perambulatory explanation.

"I have need of assistance in a little business matter, Mrs. Parlan," he said, "and investigation has convinced me that you are the one best able to give it. This is confidential, of course."

"I've got the silencer on," Mrs. Parlan assured him, wondering how a poor milliner could be of assistance to a great lawyer.

Mr. Relling evidently found her amusing, for he smiled.

"It will be to your financial advantage, naturally," he explained; "I want to make that clear at the start. What I gain from it will not be of a financial nature, but that need not concern you. It will be worth to me all that it costs." He paused for a moment, apparently finding it difficult to take up the next point, and Mrs. Parlan waited. "To make the situation clear," he resumed at last, "I shall have to let you into a family secret, relying upon your promise to consider it confidential."

"Sure," she agreed.

"My daughter Esther has opened a millinery-shop—"

"That's no secret!" broke in Mrs. Parlan bitterly. "I guess you don't read the papers. She's had advertising I couldn't get with a million dollars."

"The main fact is no secret," returned the lawyer in his even tones, "but possibly you may not have heard that this was in opposition to the wishes of her parents."

"Why don't they throw in the reverse?" demanded Mrs. Parlan. "Why don't they stop it?"

Mr. Relling again let his serious features relax into a smile—a wry smile this time. "If you knew the young lady," he said, "you would not ask that. She is of age, has a little money of her own, friends with more, and at times is inclined to be headstrong—this being one of the times."

"Spoiled!" commented Mrs. Parlan.

"Hardly that," contended Mr. Relling without showing the slightest resentment. "It is possible that we were too lenient with her in her younger years, but I would not have you get the impression that she is a pampered darling. It is only occasionally that she gives us trouble, but she can be so gently obstinate on such occasions that she presents a very difficult problem. However," he added, dismissing that phase of the question with a slight wave of his hand, "there is no need of going further into that. I merely wish you to know enough of it to understand what follows.

"This millinery business, for reasons that it is unnecessary to explain, is something from which she will not be turned by any pleas or arguments that her mother has been able to devise. For myself, I may say that I am not particularly opposed to it. In fact, I think such occupation preferable to afternoon gossip-parties and terpsichorean flirtations. But Mrs. Relling—well, I've simply got to get my daughter out of trade."

"So you're putting it up to me?"

"I expect you, with my help, to do it."

"How?"

"Competition," explained Mr. Relling. "Competition may be the life of trade, but it is not infrequently the commercial death of the trader. I expect you to run her out of business."

SUCH a proposition coming from such a source was so amazing that it drew a very blunt question from Mrs. Parlan. "Aint you the boss in your own home?" she asked. "I've always heard you made everybody stand and salute."

"Not everybody," returned Mr. Relling, again smiling, "—not you, for instance."

"Me!" exclaimed Mrs. Parlan. "Oh, I'm brashest when I'm frightened, as a general thing. It's mostly camouflage with me. I keep a line of good English for them that choose their hats with their ears, but slang comes easier, especially when I'm off my regular beat."

"Anyhow," pursued Mr. Relling, "I am helpless in this matter, so far as authority is concerned. The most that I can do is to order her from the house if she continues recalcitrant—"

"Re-which?"

"Obstinate."

"Oh!"

"And that would merely make matters worse, for she'd go rather than give in. From a society point of view, as Mrs. Relling sees it, a daughter in trade, although highly objectionable, is slightly preferable to a family scandal. However, this is my part of the problem, not yours."

"Mine, as I get it," returned Mrs. Parlan, "is to break the girl."

"Let us say, discourage her," corrected Mr. Relling. "I should never permit bankruptcy proceedings, of course, but I think we can make her rather anxious to get out of business."

Mrs. Parlan shook her head dubiously. "I'd like to do it," she admitted; "I'd like to put the kibosh on any of these society women who cut in and take business from those that need it, but this don't look to me like an easy job, and I'd be getting in wrong if I missed it. She's got the money and the shop and the location and the society drag."

"I have considered all that," explained the lawyer, the words coming with the slow regularity of his even step. "Your location is good, I understand, but your shop is rather shabby and inconvenient. The expenditure of some money, however, would make it quite as attractive as hers, Miss Budd reports, and society drag, as you call it, wont count for much after it becomes clear that you are actually giving more for the money."

Life held no greater prize, in Mrs. Relling's opinion, than an established position in society.

"I'd have to undersell her something awful," reasoned Mrs. Parlan.

"Naturally."

"And where'd I get the more to give for the money?" pursued Mrs. Parlan. "I'm as good a milliner as there is in this town, but Chicago has better, and she's razzled one from Chicago. I hear she has wonderful taste in hats, but still she aint relying on herself."

"Bring a better one from Chicago," advised Mr. Relling, "and let people know it—advertise."

"That means real money," suggested Mrs. Parlan.

"I think some of my money is real," smiled Mr. Relling; and then he stopped abruptly and faced the milliner. "If you care to undertake this task, for which my investigations lead me to think you are peculiarly fitted," he said in a more decided tone, "I am prepared to give you a check for preliminary expenses now. You can't get started too soon."

Mrs. Parlan hesitated. It seemed absurdly unreal, this offer by the great lawyer to back her in a fight with his own daughter, but there could be no doubt that he actually had made such a proposition.

"Where will I be at when I get her goat?" she asked.

"You will have a better shop than you have now, a better stock than you have now, a better business than you have now. That should amply repay you for your trouble, it seems to me."

"And I'll be owing you how much?" persisted Mrs. Parlan shrewdly.

"Nothing at all."

"Write your check," said Mrs. Parlan. "Here's where the trouble begins. And look out you don't get a cramp in your arm."

MR. RELLING was usually described as a corporation lawyer, which probably means that his fees were of a size that only a corporation could handle conveniently. He was as big a man mentally as he was small physically—so big, in fact, that he was treated with deference and respect by captains of industry and could have been a big man in a big city had he chosen to leave Kenbridge. As it was, he had a mastery of certain phases of corporation law that made him of great value in corporation councils and sometimes in their court proceedings, for which purposes he was frequently called to Chicago. This admitted importance, however, was confined to his professional life; in his home it was different.

I would not have you get the idea that he was henpecked; nor would I want to say that he was cajoled; but a little of both of these feminine methods of handling man entered into the domestic management of this able lawyer. Putting aside the problems of business when he left the office, he sought comfort, both physical and mental, in his home, but he failed to find it there when his wife was crossed in her social aspirations or his daughter was denied something that she particularly desired. The one was inclined to be sharply captious, the other persuasive and mildly insistent. However, in spite of this, a spirit of concession enabled him to enjoy a reasonable degree of comfort so long as the desires of wife and daughter did not clash. When they did—well, he was going through that experience now, and it compelled him to resort to strategy.

Mrs. Relling's social aspirations were largely, but not wholly, responsible for the trouble. These aspirations would have been less disturbing if she had been satisfied with what Kenbridge could give her socially, but she was not. She had already achieved what success was possible there, and her gaze was now fixed upon Chicago. She looked forward to the time when they would remove to Chicago, as she felt sure they would, and she wished to be prepared. Life held no greater prize, in Mrs. Relling's opinion, than an established position in society—real society. Some women are that way. So Mrs. Relling looked beyond Kenbridge to Chicago, and then beyond Chicago to Washington and New York, with international possibilities after the war. She was no diffident dreamer. But Chicago came first, and owing to the difficulties of a frontal attack, she had planned and actually begun an invading movement by way of the summer homes at Lake Geneva and Oconomowoc, having spent a little time and considerable money at each resort.

Naturally, in view of this large purpose, her daughter's insistence upon going into trade was no trifling matter to Mrs. Relling. She felt that it weakened her position in Kenbridge. Very likely it didn't, but she felt that it did, and it certainly added to the social remoteness of Chicago and the cities that lay beyond Chicago. Esther should be helping instead of hindering, for Mrs. Relling easily persuaded herself that she was planning primarily for her daughter. Esther had only to marry well, with a due regard for social position, and the thing would be done. Of course a man who had money would be preferable to one who had none, but that was a minor consideration. Mr. Relling had enough to liberally endow a son-in-law, if that should be necessary. But Esther had proved somewhat worse than indifferent to these maternal plans, and so the problem had reached her father.

COMFORTABLY settled in his armchair on the evening following his interview with Mrs. Parlan, Mr. Relling informed his wife that he had arranged matters satisfactorily. The problem was so nearly solved that he no longer felt the need of pedestrian exercise when he spoke of it; so he made the announcement from the chair in the throne-room, otherwise the library. It was his daughter who had given it the name of the throne-room, because he so often sat there alone with his books and papers, and anything desired of him had to be presented to him there; but he sometimes thought it might better have been termed the culprit's cell. Still, in his quiet way, he could issue a ukase from that room, when too hard pressed, that one felt it perilous to question. He seldom did it, preferring ease to authority, but he could. Now, when his wife looked in upon him inquiringly, he merely assured her that all was satisfactorily arranged.

"I hope so," she returned with more than a suggestion of doubt in her tone.

"It will take a little time—"

"Everything you do for your family seems to take time," she complained. "If you're as slow in your office as you are in your home, I don't see how you get any business at all."

"Possibly," suggested Mr. Relling dryly, "possibly the people I see in my office are not so impatient as those I see in my home."

"Possibly," rejoined Mrs. Relling, "the people you see in your office have less reason to be impatient. Every day that this situation continues is a bitter humiliation to me."

"Why don't you stop it?" asked Mr. Relling.

"Why don't *you?*" retorted Mrs. Relling.

"Me?" returned Mr. Relling in mild surprise. "Oh, Esther can twist me round her finger—you've often said so yourself. Besides," he argued, "a girl should be the mother's problem."

"I can't do anything with her," confessed Mrs. Relling in bitterness. "I tried to argue with her again to-day, and what do you think she said?"

"Something softly pointed," ventured Mr. Relling.

"That just exactly describes it," declared Mrs. Relling. "She was as mild as you please, but she said she really had to have something to occupy her mind."

"Meaning?"

"I knew, and so do you, but I forced her to be more explicit."

"That was unwise," opined Mr. Relling.

"She said," pursued Mrs. Relling, "that if she couldn't be a wife, she might as well be a milliner."

"Hats as a substitute for kisses," commented Mr. Relling. "Not a very satisfactory substitute, I should judge."

"Don't be coarse!"

"We must face the facts," argued Mr. Relling.

"She's doing this to distress me," asserted Mrs. Relling.

Mr. Relling shook his head. "I'd hardly say that—I mean, that her main purpose is to distress you. That's merely incidental to her main purpose."

"Which is to marry David Maitland."

Mr. Relling nodded. "That would seem to be the purpose," he said; "and yet, she can do that now. She's of age, and she even has some money of her own—that Aunt Amelia legacy."

"But she wont—while we object."

"We also object to the shop," Mr. Relling reminded her; "at least you do; and I, like a dutiful husband, uphold you."

"That's different," asserted Mrs. Relling. "It's humiliating, of course, but it's a mistake that can be rectified, while marriage isn't; and a parentally unsanctioned marriage is a scandal among nice people. So she wont. It's the one real hold that we have on her."

"And the shop is the one real hold that she has on us—that is, on you. I don't mind so much."

"You're insensible to the finer sentiments," grieved Mrs. Relling. "Sometimes I think your profession coarsens you and that it would be better if you had kept out of it."

"If I had," countered Mr. Relling mildly, "you'd likely be coarsening yourself over a kitchen range. It is better, perhaps, that corporation law should coarsen me than that housework should coarsen you."

"You take such a brutal view of things!"

"I'd be glad to escape them entirely, if you'd let me."

"Of course you would."

"However," he went on, "the shop matter is arranged, and in a little time—"

"Always a little time."

"If you think you can do this better than I—"

"Now you're going to be disagreeable," she complained.

"I am," he said, "if you don't let me alone."

"Oh, very well," she acquiesced resentfully. "But you'll tell me your plan, I suppose."

"I suppose not," rejoined Mr. Relling; and Mrs. Relling, after a quick glance at him, let it go at that. Mrs. Relling had learned how far she could go with safety.

ESTHER invaded the throne-room a little later. Esther always looked in upon him sometime during the evening, and he was particularly glad to see her on this occasion. He wished to make one more effort to arrange matters while there was yet time to abandon the extreme measures planned. He had little hope of it, having tried and failed before he saw Mrs. Parlan, but women were notoriously capricious, and there could be no harm in sounding this very difficult daughter again.

"I understand," Mr. Relling remarked in a tone of gentle banter, "that you must have something to occupy your mind."

"Mother has told you, has she?" returned the girl, her smile indicating that this was not unexpected or undesired. "I thought she would."

"Is there anything disturbing that she neglects to tell me?" asked Mr. Relling plaintively. "But you had already intimated as much."

"One can't let one's mind remain a blank," she defended.

"But couldn't you find some occupation for it that wouldn't be so objectionable—to your mother?" he inquired.

"How about you?"

"Oh, I don't expect to count."

"Well, I've turned from man to millinery to please her—"

"I'm afraid," he gently objected, "that it wasn't to please her."

"Anyhow, I gave up Davy."

"*Did* you?"

"I haven't married him, have I?"

"I don't know, but I hope not."

"Oh, that isn't fair to me, Father," she contended reproachfully. "I'd tell you if I had."

"Yes, I think you would," he assented.

"I've turned to millinery, and I can't see anything out of the way in that. Can you?"

Mr. Relling could not, but this was no time to admit it. "If your mother—" he began.

"What do *you* think?" she interrupted. Sometimes it seemed to him that she had an almost uncanny perception of the weak points in his armor.

"I haven't had time to think," he evaded, "—nor, in fact, occasion to think. My thinking has been done for me."

"So docile!" she chided. "I never knew anybody who could be so awfully meek and still be boss."

"Am I boss?" he asked doubtingly.

"When you want to be," she told him, "but you hate the job."

"Yes," he agreed, "I hate the job, and I don't seem to have much success bossing my daughter."

"I haven't married Davy, have I?"

"No, but neither have you given up the shop."

"One must have something to occupy one's mind," she reminded him.

There was whimsical reproach in Mr. Relling's reply. "You disappoint me, Essie," he complained. "Why play the same tune twice?"

"To emphasize it," she confessed frankly.

"Unnecessary," he assured her.

"It's your own fault, anyway," she asserted. "If you were fair to Davy—"

That stirred him, for he prided himself on being fair to everyone. It made a real problem of the immediate situation, for he could not let such a charge go unchallenged, and he could not challenge it without making explanations that would invite further trouble. He rose, clasped his hands behind his back, bowed his head and gave an excellent imitation of an absent-minded sentry on parade.

"Your mother thinks—" he began at last.

Esther interrupted, but in her usual gentle way. Although exasperatingly tenacious of purpose, she was never aggressive. "I know what Mother thinks," she said, "but what do you think?"

Once up and down the room he went before replying. It was an awkward question to answer frankly; so he did not answer it frankly. "I am of the opinion," he said, "that your mother is at least half right."

"That means," reasoned the girl, "that you approve of either the man or the shop."

"That means," corrected the lawyer, "that I don't altogether disapprove of one of them."

"Well, which is it?" she asked.

He knew that she was gently pushing him into a corner, but he could not help it. "Personally," he conceded, "I see nothing very objectionable in millinery."

"Then it must be Davy," was her natural conclusion.

Mr. Relling ignored Davy. "I see no reason," he went on, "why a girl may not have a gainful occupation without losing on that account anything in life that's worth having. In some cases I should consider it of high importance that she thus protect her independence. Of course, you are never likely to have need of it—"

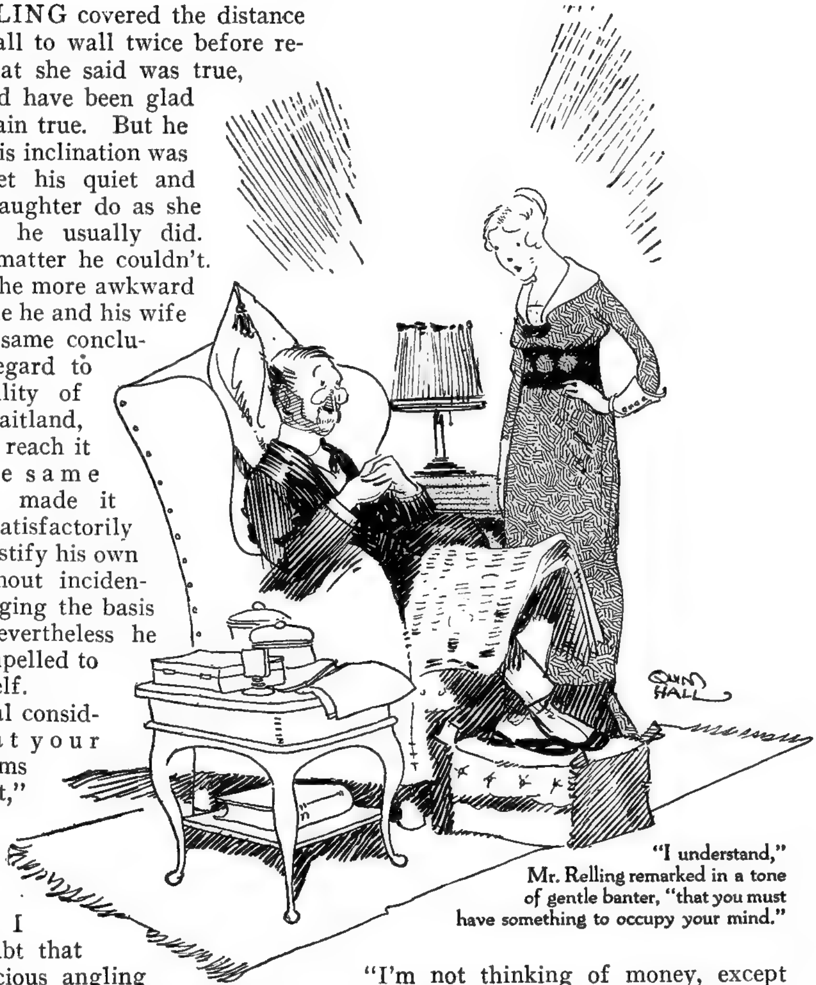
"One never can tell," she musingly contended, "just what one may gain—indirectly — from a gainful occupation."

The significance of this did not escape Mr. Relling, but he ignored it as he had ignored Davy. "You are never likely to have need of it," he repeated, "and it seems to me that your mother is entitled to some consideration. I can't bring myself to her point of view in some ways, but I know it's a very serious matter to her."

"But what's your objection to Davy?"

"Your mother thinks—"

"*Your* objection, I mean. Until now everything has been based upon her objections, and it occurs to me that I haven't heard yours."



"I understand," Mr. Relling remarked in a tone of gentle banter, "that you must have something to occupy your mind."

MR. RELLING covered the distance from wall to wall twice before replying. What she said was true, and he would have been glad to let it remain true. But he couldn't. His inclination was always to let his quiet and purposeful daughter do as she wished, and he usually did. But in this matter he couldn't. And it was the more awkward because, while he and his wife reached the same conclusion with regard to the ineligibility of David Maitland, they did not reach it by quite the same route. That made it difficult to satisfactorily define and justify his own position without incidentally disparaging the basis of hers. Nevertheless he now felt compelled to justify himself.

"The social considerations that your mother deems so important," he explained, "do not appeal to me in the least. I have no doubt that a little judicious angling would enable you to do better from a social point of view, but I suspect that you are not the kind of a girl to find happiness in Mrs. Vandusenbury's patronizing smile."

"Thank you for that."

"On the other hand," he went on, "I suspect that you are not the kind of a girl to find happiness in the fag end of the procession. You wouldn't be a success as a failure."

"Who would?"

"As a junior partner in a bankrupt concern, I mean."

"Who would?" she repeated.

"That's where some women shine," he said, "but you wouldn't."

"Do you base everything upon money?" she asked.

"I'm not thinking of money, except incidentally. You're the only child of a man who certainly isn't poor; so you don't have to think of money. Your mother has reasoned that out. Of course money remains a minor consideration, for you can't have too much of it in society, but other things are more important—to her mind. For myself, I can't believe you would ever be happy with a dependent husband."

"Horrible!" she exclaimed, startled out of her usual calm.

"I give money no thought beyond that," he assured her.

"Davy would never be a dependent husband," she declared.

"He couldn't be anything else—if his wife had money. It would be that, or love in a shanty. I don't know him very well, I confess, but I know enough of him to justify my objection to him as a son-in-law. He is what is flippantly known as a briefless barrister. He may or may not be a good lawyer, but he certainly isn't a successful one."

"He hasn't had a chance," she argued.

"Capable men make their own chances."

"He admires you greatly," she ventured, trying flattery.

"That doesn't make him a successful lawyer, however creditable it may be to his judgment."

"He'd even go in for corporation law, like you, if he had a chance."

There was a veiled significance to this, but Mr. Relling ignored it. "I'd run for the Presidency of the United States, like Wilson, if I had a chance," he rejoined.

"You're unfair to him," she charged.

"Your mother concurs in my view, or perhaps it would be better to say that I concur in hers, although our reasons are not identical. Our premises differ, but we unite on the verdict. That should count for something, don't you think?"

"But you deny me the right to exercise my own judgment in a matter that primarily concerns myself."

"My inclination," returned Mr. Relling, "has been and is to state the case as I see it and then leave the decision to you. It's you, not I, who will have to live with the man. But that is a selfish view to take of the matter." He pondered this a moment before going on. "There is no objection to Maitland morally, so far as I know," he pursued presently, "and all that I ask of a man socially—don't let your mother hear this!—is that he shall refrain from eating with his knife. Nor do I care who his parents were or where they came from, so long as it wasn't jail. But I do want him to be able to support a wife, for his own self-respect and her proper pride; and Maitland isn't."

"But he will be," she urged, "and it would be all right for me to help while he's getting his start—to give him his chance—"

"Does he subscribe to that idea?" demanded Mr. Relling, stopping short in his walk.

"No. He wants to get his start first."

"Well, let him," advised Mr. Relling, resuming his patrol. "You'll not marry him with my consent!" he added with unexpected finality.

The girl made mildly significant protest. "You blame me for going into millinery," she murmured, "when it is so clearly a matter of compulsion rather than choice."

"Compulsion?"

"One must have something to occupy one's mind, you know."

Mr. Relling resumed his chair with a grim smile when he was again alone. The audacity of her stand was amusing.

"Compulsion?" he repeated. "Compulsion? Who's doing the compelling, I wonder? I guess it's time I tried a little compulsion myself—enough to give the young woman's mind occupation—and I can do it now with a clear conscience."

THE details of the trouble that followed came to Mr. Relling from two sources: his daughter and Mrs. Parlan. That is, they provided the information, and he applied it to the situation with unpleasant results. There was occasionally an exhibit from the advertising columns of the newspapers also, but that only emphasized what they told him. And his wife, while unusually silent after her rebuff, questioned him with her eyes as to his continuing need of "a little time," but that merely emphasized her impatience for results. It was from his daughter and Mrs. Parlan that he learned the progress of his plans, and it soon became evident to him that he was paying a heartbreaking price for the slight progress made—far more than he had thought would be necessary to gain his point. He was gaining, of course; there could be no doubt of the result; but the cost made him shudder.

Mrs. Parlan reported to him at his office from time to time, usually leaving with a check, and Esther visited him in the throne-room for at least a few minutes each evening. Mrs. Parlan spoke of business exclusively when she called to see him, while Esther made merely incidental reference to business when some new detail developed, speaking usually of other things. Her first mention of business, after the interview with her father in which she reproached him with compelling her to take up millinery, was a casual remark to the effect that her venture was doing the town some good, anyway.

"In what way?" he asked.

"I'm waking up one branch of trade," she replied. "Mrs. Parlan's cleaning up —putting in new fixtures, redecorating and all that sort of thing. There's going to be one real shop in town besides mine."

"Yes, there is," he agreed, mindful of the fact that he was paying for it; "but I should think that might disturb you."

"No," she returned thoughtfully, "no, that doesn't disturb me at all. I'm rather glad of it. Competition is a good thing, isn't it, so long as there isn't too much of it?"

"So long as there isn't too much of it, yes," he returned dryly.

"And when there is?"

There was something both whimsical and significant in his reply. "Consult a lawyer," he advised.

"Davy, for instance?"

"A *good* lawyer," he said. "He can guide you through bankruptcy if he can't get you out of trouble."

"That's your line, isn't it?" she asked, and he became suddenly doubtful whether he or she was doing the bantering.

"I've handled some cases where competition threatened disaster," he admitted.

"In spite of the anti-trust laws," she prompted.

That stirred him, for success in such matters often lay in the elimination of competition by combinations and understandings not always safely within the law.

"Where did you hear that?" he demanded.

"So Davy says."

She left him to his books and papers then, but for some time he did no more than frown at them, his mind being occupied with other things. To have "Davy" quoted to him was irritating, to say the least. It could not materially affect the situation, but it was irritating, and he might be troublesome. Any fool, with a credulous girl listening to him, could be troublesome.

A FEW days later she mentioned business again, still in a rather indifferent way. He never brought up the subject. It was part of his policy to leave the initiative to her and to make no more than casual comment upon what she told him. But he was glad to have her tell him what she would.

"Mrs. Parlan evidently means to make a real fight upon poor me," she remarked, "and she's the best milliner in town."

"Better than you?" he queried.

"Oh, I'm no milliner at all," she replied. "I have taste and a natural aptitude for the work, but no training."

"Beginning to worry a little, are you?"

"Oh, no, not at all. I have a really expert milliner from Chicago in charge of my shop. I look after the business, and she looks after the hats. I wanted to be able to assure my patrons that I could give them real Chicago service."

"And you can?"

"Oh, yes, I can; but so can Mrs. Parlan. She's also getting some one here from Chicago. Did you hear about that? But no, you wouldn't, of course."

"No, I naturally wouldn't hear that," he agreed, wondering just what it was costing him. "But doesn't that worry you?"

"Certainly not," she replied confidently. "Why should it? There is room for us both, and I'll get the cream of the business, anyhow."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"No doubt of it at all. But she puzzles me. I can't understand how she came to life so suddenly—and where she got the money."

"A legacy, perhaps," he suggested.

"Davy thinks not."

He frowned, as before, and again she left him to his books and papers. But he put them aside to do a little figuring. The foolish advice of a foolish young man was costing him some money.

The third time she mentioned business to him she seemed to be troubled herself, although she wouldn't admit it.

"Perplexed; that's all," she insisted;

"but did you see the evening paper?" Kenbridge had but one morning and one evening paper.

"Of course."

"Then you must have noticed Mrs. Parlan's advertisement."

As he was paying for it, he had given it rather close attention, but it was not the part of wisdom to admit that.

"Half a page," she added explanatorily, "and the same this morning."

"Oh, yes, I recall it now."

"I have been advertising in a modest and dignified way," she went on, "but this is a splurge—and almost personal in its tone. It picks out shapes that I've been featuring and cuts prices clear below actual cost."

"Well, she can't keep that up very long," said Mr. Relling, smiling over the way his plan was working out.

"So Davy says," acquiesced the girl.

"Hang Davy!" exploded Mr. Relling with an unusual flash of temper.

"Why?" she asked. "Because he admires you and agrees with you?"

"Perhaps," he replied, regaining his poise. "Anyhow, I suppose there's nothing for you to do but splurge also."

The bigger the splurge, he reasoned, the quicker the end, but she was not ready for that, it appeared.

"Davy thinks not," she rejoined.

His temper was under control now, however, and this brought no more than the usual frown.

"Davy's idea," she explained with a confidence that was extremely irritating, "is to exhaust her resources with the least possible drain upon mine—to do only so much as is necessary to keep her splurging. That is wise, don't you think?"

Too wise, he thought, but he did not say so. In fact, he did not say anything; it was better to let her talk.

"Of course," she went on, "her price-cutting and advertising will take away some of my business, but the more she gets on that basis, the sooner she'll fail, and then I'll get it all back. So I'm not worrying. Think what it's costing her!"

He did, naturally.

"So I'm not worrying," she said again, and it occurred to him that she was a little too insistent upon that point. She could not possibly have the money to meet such competition, and that would naturally worry her—if she had the wit to realize it in the face of her foolish adviser, of which he was by no means certain.

Anyhow, the conservative plan she outlined made his undertaking look the more difficult and costly, even if no less certain of success, and that so far worried him that, being left alone, he pushed aside his books and papers and took up his wall-to-wall patrol. He felt the need of this mentally clarifying exercise.

His wife added something to the disquietude of the moment by looking in upon him just long enough to ask him what he would call "a little time." Then, although troubled herself, she retired hastily without waiting for a reply. Something in his manner advised it.

THERE was trouble for everybody, and it all seemed to center upon him. Even breezy Mrs. Parlan admitted that she was worried when she called at his office a few days later.

"That girl of yours is a bird, all right," she told him. "Stands the gaff like a veteran."

He did not like that reference to his daughter, and he frowned his disapproval. "Do you use that sort of language to your patrons?" he asked as a gentle hint of his feeling in the matter.

"Sure not," she replied. "I drop into it when I'm jarred off my jiggers, and that's what you did to me at the start. But I'm getting over it now."

"Yes?"

"Oh, yes. It's your daughter, not you, that's got me buffaloed now."

"What has she done?"

"Nothing at all. That's what's biting me. I'd like to see her worry a little."

"She's worrying," he asserted confidently.

"She don't show it as much as you do."

Inwardly exasperated by this, he remained outwardly as calm as ever. "You think I'm worrying?" he questioned.

"If you aint," she returned, "you've got no business being loose without a keeper. We're getting too big a drag on business. It looks to me like she's forcing it on us instead of trying to keep it, and every bit we get costs money. She's losing, of course, but she's losing trade while we're throwing away real cash with both hands, and it's got me to wondering how long you'll stick."

"You needn't worry about that," he assured her.

"Perhaps not," she acquiesced dubiously, "but she takes her loss with a grin, and that looks bad. She takes it easier than the other milliners, and I don't have to be told that I'm getting in wrong with them too, which don't cheer me any too much."

"I suppose it does hit them," he reflected.

"Sure it does. They can't meet my prices and live; so most of them don't try. That piles more losing business on me. And what they're saying about me would shock a parrot. Of course, my location and advertising makes it hit her hardest, but it looks to me like we'll bust some others before she goes under."

"I hadn't thought of that," he mused, "but it can't be helped. I didn't anticipate so hard a fight," he added by way of explanation.

"Probably it didn't occur to you either," she suggested, "that playing this game too strong would bring in the jay-birds."

"What do you mean?"

"There's some suburbs and small towns close to us where the ladies can't get anybody to go fifty-fifty with them on their millinery, so they're flocking in to hang it onto you. . . . . Oh, I thought that would start you walking the floor."

He had to admit, to himself, that this hadn't occurred to him either, and it was perplexing enough to get him on his feet.

"Every hat they buy here," she explained, "costs you about as much as it does them, and it looks to me like your daughter got wise to what's happening before you did."

"No," he decided, as his thoughts began to get in step with his feet, "no, she couldn't possibly have foreseen this influx of suburban business. She's a girl of no business experience, you know."

"And you're a man of large business experience," rejoined Mrs. Parlan with ruthless directness; "yet she's got you on the slide."

"It's a common saying," he explained, studying the design of the rug in which he was wearing a path, "that a lawyer who tries his own case has a fool for a client, which means that he is more careless with his own business than he would be with another's."

"Well, that's something for you to settle with yourself," she reasoned. "What has me up a tree is whether you're game to go to the finish when you see where you're at. The man with the wad usually ducks first when the going gets hard; it's the little fellow that sticks."

Mr. Relling winced at that, but he seemed to think his earlier assurance sufficient, for he did not add to it.

"I'm getting in bad with a lot of good people," she went on, "and I don't want to be left holding the bag when it's all over."

Mr. Relling still pondered and was silent.

"However," Mrs. Parlan reflected, "I guess maybe you couldn't afford to ditch me anyhow. You wouldn't stand very high in this town if it came out that you was backing a fight on a lot of poor milliners, no matter what your reasons were."

The significance of that brought Mr. Relling to so sudden a stop that one foot hung suspended in the air for a moment before he gently lowered it to the rug.

"And your reasons would be a joke," added Mrs. Parlan.

They would; no doubt about that.

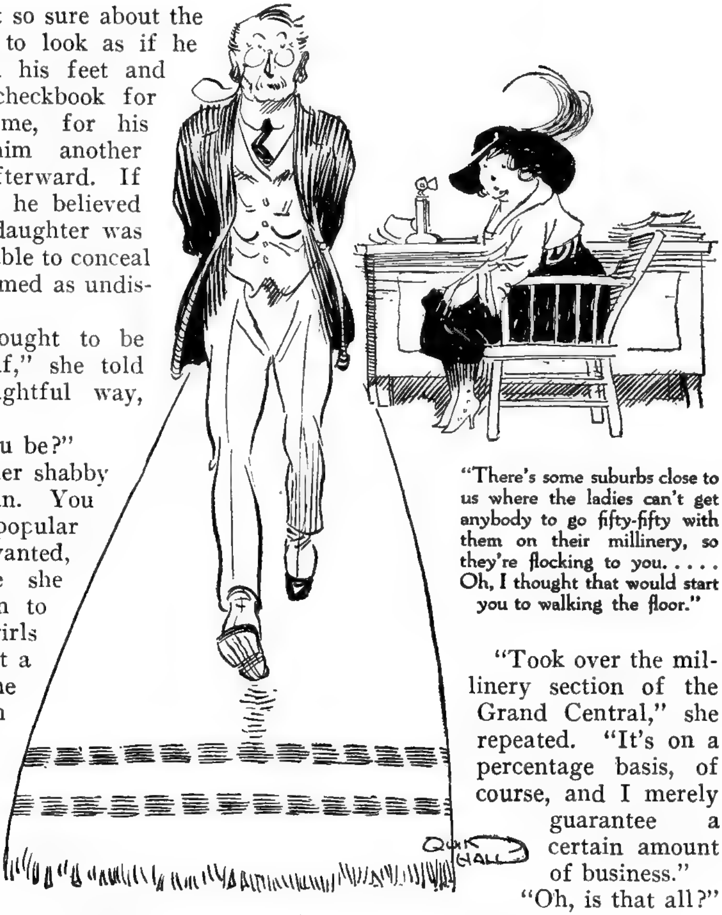
"But not so big a joke," she pursued, "as the bare idea of Alonzo J. Relling selling bonnets."

He could almost see the newspaper headlines and hear the chuckles of those who read the story.

"I shall go through with it," he promised, resuming his walk; and then, as evidence of his determination: "Do you need any more money?"

"Five hundred."

HE gave her a check, which somewhat eased his mind, but the tangle in which he found himself kept him on his feet for some time after she had left. He would not be a "joke" for the pres-



"There's some suburbs close to us where the ladies can't get anybody to go fifty-fifty with them on their millinery, so they're flocking to you. . . . . Oh, I thought that would start you to walking the floor."

ent, but he was not so sure about the future. It began to look as if he might be kept on his feet and reaching for his checkbook for some time to come, for his daughter gave him another shock not long afterward. If really troubled, as he believed she must be, his daughter was most wonderfully able to conceal that fact. She seemed as undisturbed as usual.

"I suppose I ought to be ashamed of myself," she told him in her thoughtful way, "but I'm not."

"Why should you be?"

"I played a rather shabby trick on Mrs. Parlan. You see, she had some popular shapes that I wanted, and of course she wouldn't sell them to me, so I got some girls to buy them one at a time. They cost me less that way than they would at wholesale in Chicago, so now I've got them all, and she's got to buy more at a higher price. I suspect some others are playing the same game with her too. I wonder how much she can stand of that sort of thing."

He wondered how much of it he would have to stand.

"The way she's acted toward all of us, and especially me, justifies it, anyway," she decided, adding: "Even Davy concedes that."

He let "Davy" pass as usual, although the temptation was strong to explode again.

"Aren't you overstocking?" he asked.

"Oh, no, I think not," she replied. "You see, I took over the millinery section of the Grand Central Department-Store to-day."

That shocked him out of even a pretense of indifference.

"You what?" he exclaimed, almost upsetting his chair in his haste to get to his feet.

"Took over the millinery section of the Grand Central," she repeated. "It's on a percentage basis, of course, and I merely guarantee a certain amount of business."

"Oh, is that all?"

"Yes, that is all."

He was on his feet now, and it gave him the poise he needed for a clearer view of the situation. And it wasn't a pleasant view. It was his purpose, of course, to wind up her affairs and take her out of the business world without the stigma of actual failure when the time came, and he saw this becoming more of a job than he had thought possible. He was, in effect, backing both sides, and every move made increased the expense of one or the other, if not both.

"You couldn't make one shop pay," he commented with mild sarcasm, "so you take two. That helps, of course."

"Davy advised it," she explained.

"He's a good adviser," returned Mr. Relling, "if you know what to do with his advice. As a reverse guidepost he is probably unequaled."

"Oh, well, it's nothing to you," was her careless rejoinder.

"Nothing to— Oh, no, of course not."

It was discouraging, but news of a more cheering nature followed. Mrs. Parlan, calling again at his office, reported that an attempt had been made to buy her out.

"By David Maitland?" he asked.

"You've guessed it," she said.

"Not much of a guess," he deprecated. "He'd naturally act for her in such a matter, and there couldn't be another such fool in the world anyway. Three shops when she can't make one pay! What did he say?"

"Oh, he said he just wanted to give me a chance to get out while the getting was good. He's certainly got plenty of nerve."

"No doubt," returned Mr. Relling. "Any fool may have nerve. What did you tell him?"

"I told him there was nothing doing at any price."

"And then what did he say?"

"He said he was glad of that."

"Glad?" repeated Mr. Relling.

"That's what he said."

"Then why did he make the offer?"

"I'm asking you, why did he?"

"Desperate!" decided Mr. Relling. "A forlorn hope backed by a silly bluff. That's the only explanation, and that means the end of the farce. Do you know, Mrs. Parlan, that takes quite a load off my mind?"

"Farce!" echoed Mrs. Parlan. "Well, maybe, but I'll bet you could put on grand opera for less money."

MR. RELLING was called to Chicago on business. He felt that it was an inopportune moment to leave Kenbridge, but one does not neglect the summons of a big corporation to undertake a big job. And after all, it didn't much matter. He would prefer to be on the ground when the inevitable happened, but it wasn't really necessary. He could be reached by wire in time to head off any unpleasant consequences, which he would naturally do the moment Esther confessed herself beaten. Meanwhile Mrs. Parlan, being provided with money, could continue her campaign.

So Mr. Relling went to Chicago, had a conference with Bradley of the Union Tool Company and then proceeded to New York to take charge of the legal end of some negotiations in progress there. He was held there two weeks, during which time he heard twice from his wife, once from his daughter, and not at all from Mrs. Parlan.

Mrs. Relling wrote nothing of any new developments at home, but she did suggest that "a little time" did not seem to mean the same thing to all people. Esther mentioned business only incidentally—in a postscript. "Mrs. Parlan is a peculiarly obtuse person," she wrote. "Davy thinks I may have to put her out of business."

If there was nothing in these letters to comfort him, there was at least nothing to especially disquiet him, and Esther's made him smile. Moreover, the fact that Mrs. Parlan did not write at all was reassuring, for it clearly indicated that all was going well.

Returning to Chicago when his business in New York was concluded, he called at the offices of the Union Tool Company to report to Bradley, and he found the latter chuckling over a Chicago morning newspaper. Bradley, indeed, was so amused and interested that he neglected, for the moment, the business in hand.

"Here's news from your town, Relling!" Bradley exclaimed. "But you've heard it, of course."

"No," returned Mr. Relling, "—no, I have had no unusual news from home since I left. Is it in the morning papers?"

"One of them makes quite a feature of it. But you must know something about it. Why, there's a girl of your name mixed up in it—a milliner—Esther Relling. Any relation?"

"Yes," acknowledged Mr. Relling, steeling himself for whatever shock might follow. "Yes, she's a relation. What has she done?"

"She? Oh, nothing. It's a young lawyer who's done it all—Maitland—David Maitland. Know him?"

"Slightly."

"Well, keep your eye on him," advised Bradley. "He looks like a coming man

—I'm not sure we don't need him in this office. Why, when it comes to consolidating businesses, Relling, he's got you outclassed, and you're pretty good at that yourself."

"Go on," said Mr. Relling resignedly. "What has he done?"

"He's consolidated the milliners of Kenbridge."

"All of them?" asked Mr. Relling after pondering this a moment.

"All but one."

"That one would be Mrs. Parlan," reflected Mr. Relling.

"I thought you didn't know about this!" exclaimed Bradley.

"I'm a good guesser," returned Mr. Relling.

"Well, that isn't the detail that interests me," pursued Bradley. "It's the central idea of a millinery-consolidation that compels my admiration. Anybody who can harmonize a bunch of women in any line of business and get them all under one roof, figuratively speaking, has a finer combination of diplomacy and good hard sense than the Lord usually allots to one individual. You've had enough experience with women and with business to see that."

"I have," agreed Mr. Relling. "Just harmonizing a home circle is not without its difficulties."

"Organizing a Standard Oil Company would be an insignificant little job beside it," declared Bradley. "But this Maitland has done it—put together a little hand-made trust that is described as air-tight."

"But what's the idea?" questioned Mr. Relling.

"The article is a bit hazy in some details, as newspaper articles usually are," replied Bradley, "but the trouble seems to have started when some outsider—a man, they suspect—tried to break in—got a woman as a figurehead and set out to stir things up. He did it, all right,"—and Bradley chuckled again,—"but he'll be waking up with a headache about now, don't you think?"

"Yes," responded Mr. Relling. "I think he will."

"Serves him right, too," declared Bradley. "Women and millinery! That's no combination for a man."

"Evidently not," agreed Mr. Relling; "but this Maitland got into it also, it seems."

"Only to help the ladies," explained Bradley. "Besides, he's an exceptional man—his work shows it."

"But he can't keep the field clear," argued Mr. Relling.

"That isn't his job," asserted Bradley. "He organizes these women so as to give them a clear field, takes his little fee and backs out. Then it's up to them to keep it clear. He isn't going into the millinery business, he says; he's simply putting the Consolidated Milliners on a firm basis, but he's doing that job right—closing about half the shops, keeping the best locations, combining overhead expenses and doing everything else necessary to give the best service for the least money. Why, he's even taken in the millinery section of a big department-store, according to this article."

"Yes, I've heard that," admitted Mr. Relling.

"SEEMS to me you've heard of a good deal," commented Bradley suspiciously.

"Quite a bit," confessed Mr. Relling; "but you've been able to tell me something."

"You ought to be able to see it yourself," returned Bradley; "it's certainly plain enough for a corporation lawyer. Anybody can rent one of the abandoned shops, but it looks to me as if an individual bucking the Consolidated Milliners might have a hard time. I'm inclined to be sorry for this Mrs. Parlan, although Maitland says it's her own fault, as he gave her a chance to come into the combination."

"Let's talk of something cheerful," urged Mr. Relling, "—pestilence and famine or something like that."

"Cheerful!" exclaimed Bradley, puzzled. "Why, there's a laugh in every line of this, and the deeper you go the louder the laugh. This boy has put over a joke."

"But I suspect that I'm the joke," protested Mr. Relling.

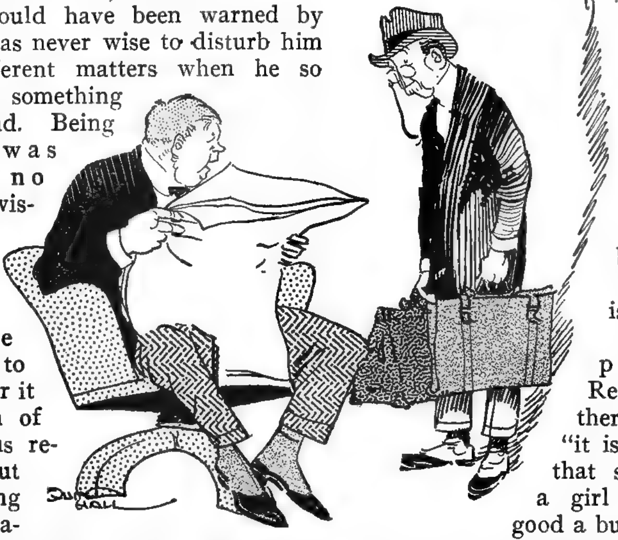
"You!"

"And now I must go home and lay down the law."

"To whom?" asked Bradley in bewilderment.

"To my wife," replied Mr. Relling glumly; and he further puzzled Bradley by adding: "I don't believe I'd bother to send any scouts out after that young Maitland, if I were you. I suspect he isn't going to be available after I get home."

To Mr. Relling in his library came Mrs. Relling on the evening of his return. Mr. Relling was pacing the floor, his hands clasped behind his back, his head bowed, and Mrs. Relling should have been warned by that. It was never wise to disturb him with indifferent matters when he so clearly had something on his mind. Being alone, he was dropping no words of wisdom, and that should have been even more disquieting to his wife, for it was a sign of a dangerous repression. But Mrs. Relling was impatient; so she made pointed reference to the length of "a little time."



"Here's news from your town, Relling!" Bradley exclaimed. "Why, there's a girl of your name mixed up in it."

Mr. Relling wheeled and faced her. "We will forget that!" he said harshly.

Mrs. Relling gave him a quick glance and saw at once that it was something to be forgotten.

"It is possible that we have misjudged Maitland," explained Mr. Relling in a milder tone, as he resumed his walk.

"Not socially," contended Mrs. Relling weakly.

"I have no doubt," said Mr. Relling, "that you can find a better dancer, but I have a preference for brains in the head rather than in the heels. I have been testing this young man, although he didn't know it—"

"Didn't know it?" repeated Mrs. Relling.

"No; and neither did I—at the time."

Mrs. Relling could only look at him in bewilderment.

"It is possible—" he mused, and stopped. "Well, we'll see," he decided. "I've sent for him—sent Esther."

She found courage to reproach him for that, but he was in no humor to stand reproach.

"We wont discuss that, either," he warned. "Esther may know him better than we do."

"She wouldn't be so good a judge," argued Mrs. Relling.

"On the other hand," pursued Mr. Relling, ignoring her contention, "it may be Esther who has the brains."

"Of course it is."

"And yet," persisted Mr. Relling, still further confusing her, "it is hard to believe that so inexperienced a girl could have so good a business head."

"Anyhow," asserted Mrs. Relling, "I shall never—"

"Yes, you will," interrupted Mr. Relling very deliberately; and Mrs. Relling realized at once that she certainly would.

She was not called upon to admit it, however, for Esther, arriving with David just then, made a reply unnecessary.

Mr. Relling gave David closer attention now than he ever had before. The most noticeable thing about the smooth-shaven young man was his frank and good-natured smile. Mr. Relling, who was inclined to be serious, had always seen weakness in that smile, but it now occurred to him that there might lie back of it strength and not a little shrewdness.

He motioned both David and Esther

to chairs, but he himself remained on his feet. In fact, with occasional pauses to emphasize some point, he continued his rug-patrol.

"You organized the Consolidated Milliners?" he began, suddenly addressing the youth.

"Yes," smiled David.

"You knew, I suppose, that I was involved?"

"Oh, yes."

"How did you learn that?" pursued Mr. Relling.

"It was a natural deduction from the known facts," David explained. "Mrs. Parlan lacked the money and the nerve to make such a fight alone, and it was very evident that there was no combination of milliners back of her, for she was hitting the others almost as much as she was hitting Esther—that is, Miss Relling."

"Why 'Miss Relling' in a family party?" inquired Esther with a doubtful glance at her father.

"Mr. Maitland is quite right," put in Mrs. Relling. "Miss Relling to him, of course."

"You never can tell about family parties," remarked David, again with his good-natured, rather ingratiating smile.

"Go on," said Mr. Relling, ignoring the comment.

"Well, aside from the milliners," resumed David, "there wasn't anybody who could have any business reason for making such a fight on Esther, and no matter how many others were hit, it was clearly a fight on Esther alone. Moreover, it was such a costly fight—"

"About ten times as costly as it looked," acknowledged Mr. Relling, and then it occurred to him that back of the young man's smile lurked a gleam of triumph.

"Such a costly fight," repeated David, "that it would take a very strong reason to justify it, and I naturally knew that you had a strong reason."

"Did you?" returned Mr. Relling suspiciously.

"Well, I knew from Esther how Mrs. Relling felt about it, and that looked like a strong reason to me."

"Perhaps it was your idea in the first place?" queried Mr. Relling.

"No," replied David; "I merely took hold of it when trouble came."

"Well, you made a very pretty tangle of it, anyway," Mr. Relling asserted. "Now perhaps you know the way out."

"Naturally," said David.

"Of course," agreed Esther.

"What is it?" demanded Mr. Relling.

"Is this idle curiosity," questioned David, "or are you consulting me as a lawyer?"

"It's no idle curiosity," asserted Mr. Relling emphatically.

"Then," said David, "I should advise you to give your daughter's mind some other occupation."

Mr. Relling frowned, but he gave no other evidence of the annoyance he may have felt. "I seem to have heard something to that effect before," he remarked; "but it doesn't untangle things."

"She will then be ready to retire from business," David explained, "and Mrs. Parlan can buy her membership in the Consolidated Milliners, which will automatically end the fight without betraying the part that you have played in that fight."

"Against the Winds"
a new novel
by Kate Jordan
The story of a girl whose world came crashing about her when she discovered the secret in her mother's life.
Begins in our next issue.

Mr. Relling was not blind to the significance of that last suggestion, and he pondered it a moment before replying. Then he asked where Mrs. Parlan would get the necessary money.

"Where she has been getting it," replied David.

Mr. Relling stopped short, scowled at David and then resumed his nervous ambulation.

"Well, you made a pretty tangle of it," Mr. Relling asserted. "Now perhaps you know the way out."

"Is this idle curiosity," questioned David, "or are you consulting me as a lawyer?"

"It's no idle curiosity," asserted Mr. Relling.

"That will provide for Mrs. Parlan," argued David, "enable Esther to meet her losses and cost you little, if any, more than it would to pay those losses direct. Now, as to the matter of my fee—"

"Your future first," interrupted Mr. Relling, being in no doubt as to the "fee" that would be demanded.

"Corporation law, I think," said David. "This little affair has given me some prestige—and there would be more —very much more—if it were known whom I have beaten."

There would—no doubt of that! But it did not sway Mr. Relling; he had already made up his mind. There being no need to punish the rug further, he dropped into his armchair.

"I see two possible partnerships for you," he informed the young man. "When you get back from your honeymoon, I shall be glad to talk to you about the other."

Mrs. Relling twice opened her mouth to speak, but wisely changed her mind and said nothing. After all, she was getting her daughter out of trade.

On the Lip Of the Man-Eater

By

Albert Dorrington

THE sandstorm had blown seaward, leaving a taste of splintered glass on the palate. Farland crawled from the tent and found Conor building a fire under the camp-kettle. The Assyrian desert stretched north and west like an Arizona night-piece in the moon-glow. A few spindly palms peered down from a hot night sky that was blue at the length of one's arms.

"Before that sand blizzard chipped in, I was saying that the Arabs hereabouts are the last of the earth's great men," Farland stated cheerfully. "They took sand with their goats'-milk, and it made 'em so tough they could eat raw hyena for breakfast."

Conor blew his patent fuel to flame before responding. "Any of our old Sioux could give these black fuzzies the five-cent look if it came to scrapping. And they ate raw honey with the bear instead of pep."

The discussion terminated in a chill silence. A forty-pound bulldog dozed, chin down in the sand, its slat eyes waking occasionally to note the lighted match held over Farland's pipe.

A half-rolled ordnance map lay at the tent-door; a theodolite and surveyor's outfit spoke of work done in the earlier part of the day. At the foot of the hill on which they had camped a long sleeve of blue water marked the Gulf of Akbar, which empties with every tide into the historic depths of the Red Sea. Farland had surveyed a pipe-line from El-Haji in the interests of the Seven Geysers Syndicate, located in a thirty-story building somewhere on Broadway. Farland was in his twenty-fifth year. He had ranched and engineered to no purpose until the lure of oil had carried him oversea. The pipe-line was needed to convey oil from El-Haji to an old sandbag pier, half visible from where they sat. Desolation throbbed in every pulse of the slow-moving tides.

Four hundred miles north, the guns of Islam were speaking hoarsely in their sullen retreat along the Jerusalem road. Farland was not concerned with the war, although he often craved to walk with the bugles through the land of David and the Carpenter of Nazareth. A young wife waited his homecoming in Jersey City. The gush at El-Haji had given him his first real chance, and Ruth would hear the news in less than a week.

The bulldog roused them at dawn with a short-clipped bark that carried no farther than Farland's ear. Slipping from his blanket, he glanced down the hill before Conor had gained his feet.

An Arab *dhow* had settled alongside the sandbag pier, her greasy sails lurching idly in the rising breeze. The beach was alive with the black, half-naked crew that spilled from her ugly deck and after-house. Under the direction of a tousle-haired captain in cast-off jeans, they streamed uphill toward the camp. In his right hand the captain carried a rifle. A mixed array of spears, knives and fowling-pieces came with the jostling Arab horde.

FARLAND stepped into the tent and reached for his big service pattern revolver lying beside his bed. After a moment's reflection he put it aside. "If shooting is going to count, these guys could kill us at five hundred yards," he said to Conor. "We'll do some chin-wagging instead."

The bulldog remained, flat-eared and watchful, a pebble's-throw from the tent-door. "Steady, Bill!" Farland cautioned. "No tricks with this bunch, or they'll feed you to the crows."

The *dhow*-men came with a rush, swinging their weapons and shouting the name of their prophet. The two white men put up their hands as the captain halted fifty feet away.

He was sixty, with a face that seemed to have been blown out of a pyramid. It was pock-pitted and scarred from lip to brow. He stood six feet in his naked soles, a column of muscle and spare flesh that would have disputed with a Corbett or a Willard. He spoke in Arabic, and his voice had the blade-edge ring of one who had shouted at slaves in the market-places of the old Sudan. Farland had gathered a working vocabulary of Arabic in the Egyptian bazaars, and he listened with his head flung back.

"Who art thou?" the captain demanded. "What hidden wealth in this sacred land has brought thee?"

Farland controlled himself with an effort. "We dig for the earth-oil," he explained, fully aware that his interrogator was some rascally adventurer who lived by the sweat of his slave-running crew. "We are here by permission of the Government."

The *dhow*-captain stared over his shoulder into the tent beyond. "My people are hungry," he declared with a dark glance at Conor and the bulldog. "We must have dollars to buy the things of life—gold, paper money, trinkets. Give thou, and we go."

"An army of wire-worms," Conor commented under his breath.

A few dollar-bills lined Farland's pocketbook. His syndicate always remitted to a bank at Port Said. His checks were currency at El-Haji. Silver or gold he had none; and Conor was in a similar position.

Handing the thin pocketbook to the waiting *dhow*-captain, together with his nickel watch and guard, he signed to Conor to follow suit.

With the nose of a banker the captain smelled the low denomination of the money. The flesh seemed to crease over his black skull; a fierce oath in the vernacular blew from his thick lips. In a flash the horde was loose in the tent. Pillaging hands rent open bags and belongings, scattering them into the open for closer scrutiny. As nothing of value was unearthed, the visitors wandered around in angry groups, sniffing, complaining like jackals on a lost trail.

The captain squatted in the sand and explored Farland with the eyes of a human bargain-hunter. The nickel watch and guard dangled from his greasy left hand, while his rifle slanted wickedly from the top of his updrawn knees.

"Thou hast told me a tale about thy money," he jeered, "—thou who bringest so little into our land and takest so much away. Where is thy money?"

Farland shook his head. "Men do not bring their banks into the desert," he explained. Then with a note of anger: "Thou takest all and givest nothing; why complain?"

His words acted like a live wire on the squatting *dhow*-captain. Standing erect, the captain spoke to the armed gang flitting around the empty tent.

"By the Prophet, we endure insults from these unbelievers!" He jerked his rifle at Farland. "Bring this one to the water."

FARLAND endured what his strength could not evade. Flung to the ground, his arms and legs were roped with the celerity born of long practice. A dozen arms bore him down the sandy slope almost to the water's edge. Here he was pitched onto a heap of stones, swearing under his breath at the ill luck which had put this crew of slave-hunters on his trail.

The *dhow* rolled in the tide like an unclean bird at roost. A single plank and line held her to the sandbag pier. Half a dozen Arabs, naked to their loin-cloths, were scanning a large baited hook which had been cast into the deep water beyond. The captain approached and directed their efforts from time to time, while the sun rose like the cone of a volcano over the low-lying hills.

Bill had trotted down unmolested to the beach and lay breathing softly near the helpless Farland.

A sudden cry from the *dhow's* poop sent the captain in the direction of the fishermen. The six were hauling on a stiff, vibrating line that hummed and quivered with each effort.

A terrific commotion began at the end of the line. The water was whipped into great holes. From one of these whirling funnels the blue head of a monster shark appeared, but only for an instant, and again the relentless struggle was continued, the fishermen pitting cunning against the ferocious strength of their prey.

From where he lay Farland saw a gray belly flash and dive—and again saw the blue head with its cave of razor-edged teeth snapping, grinding on the hook.

"Yahee!" The seven Arabs played brains against the strength of the sea, easing the jag when the flogging, livid length threatened the line. Foot by foot they steered it to a basin-shaped inlet beyond the pier. In all his life Farland had never seen so much pent-up fury hauled from the sea.

The tide washed over the blue, shovel-shaped head, while the *dhow*-horde gathered round the line waiting for the captain to speak.

He approached Farland meditatively, his ragged jeans flapping in the morning breeze. The bulldog rose from the sand and eyed the on-comer steadily. Scenting useless trouble, Farland cautioned the dog sternly. The captain fingered his rifle menacingly.

"The dog hath a smile that may be cured," he intimated sneeringly. Then, pointing to the blue-headed monster wallowing in the shallows, he addressed Farland.

"We of the Faith love sport, Christian. What think you of the sea-beast on our line?"

A sick frost-feeling held Farland for an instant; yet his voice rang steady as he answered: "I've seen bigger sea-game in my own country. All the same, this one is some hitter."

"By Allah, yes, and he will hit until he is dead!" He signed to an Arab sailor carrying a noosed rope and indicated the flat-eared bulldog standing by Farland.

Scenting trouble, Bill whipped round, bristling and watchful.

The sailor with the noosed rope came nearer, uttering threatening sounds. Bill accepted the sounds as a personal affront. In his varied career he had never balked a challenge from man or dog.

His flying dash would certainly have landed him at the fellow's breast if the noose had not intervened. It was a clean shot and landed Bill in the sand like a trussed torpedo, the noose drawn tight and knotted about his palpitating girth.

Farland swore silently.

THE Arab slave-runners had formed a half-circle above the sandy basin to watch the sport the captain was providing. The six fishermen still clung to the line that held the snapping jaws of the shark. At its greatest depth the basin held no more than five feet of water. The tide had begun to ebb, and the monster's ocean-going instincts compelled it to further efforts to gain the open sea.

A jag on the line steered the blue head from its purpose and brought it round with a floundering rush to the shallow end of the basin. A howl of Arab laughter went up when Muley appeared hauling Bill through the sand.

"The coyotes!" Farland gritted. "And I allowed them to get my gun!"

Muley stepped thigh-deep into the water, leaving Bill on the edge of the basin, straining against the tight-drawn lariat in Muley's hands. With extreme craft the Arab waded in the rear of the struggling shark and waited, stiff-poised until the propeller-shaped tail-fin ceased flailing the air. With a lightning cast of his coiled rope the noose fell and encircled the fin-bladed extremity.

Fifty shrieking voices applauded the trick. Muley sprang from the water with the ease of a matador escaping a charging bull. And just here the six fishermen holding the hooked line indulged in a savage jag of the hook. The effect on Bill was immediate. He described a flying crescent through the air and fell like a plug of dynamite into the churning waters of the basin. Rising to the surface, he struck out for the shore. Within ten feet of the sandy sides the rope grew taut; the shark's propeller fin made a left to right movement after the manner of a conductor's baton. Bill was lifted bodily from the water and hurled with boomerang force across the basin and back.

Gasping and snuffling, he battled to the surface, half blinded and stunned by the Homeric impacts. His bulldog anger and disgust were great. Turning suddenly in the water, he observed the steely, propellerlike fin which had caused the mischief. Doubling, he headed straight for his tormentor.

Just here the hook-line holders proved themselves no sports. A snatch of the line deepened the gash in the shark's reddened jaws. The tail-fin swept skyward, and Bill skated fifteen feet across the surface of the basin as though he had been projected from a tube.

"By Allah, he has had enough!" The *dhow*-captain held up his hand and allowed it to fall. Muley skipped into the water and slashed the lariat with a knife. Bill struggled ashore, choking and shaking the water from his heaving sides.

"A good dog," the captain commented thoughtfully. Then he looked at Farland curiously, his fingers caressing the breech of his rifle. "Thou canst not remember the dollars hidden up there?" He jerked a thumb in the direction of the tent.

Farland answered with difficulty and with due regard for the tilted rifle in his questioner's hand. "My money is in the bank, far from here. I have given you my word that I carry nothing but my life."

The *dhow*-captain plucked his spike-end of beard, while his slow wrath welled like poison fumes in his eyes. "Only thy life," he said slowly; "and a nickel time-machine that is not worth a basket of corn. So be it."

HE moved away, the black lines quivering under his tattered jeans. Muley caught his eye and responded with a silent grin.

The fishermen were now cautioned against disturbing the sulking shark which lay head-on to the bar of sand at the basin entrance. Stealthily and without sound, Muley gathered the cut rope which trailed from propeller-fin and deftly knotted it to a longer piece. Stepping to the beach he approached Farland and attached the rope quickly to his waist. The *dhow*-captain nodded from afar.

"Cut the Christian's hands free," he ordered, "or there will be no sport. Get ready. By the Prophet, our morning is already gone!"

IN that moment Farland tasted death in its most revolting form. It needed but a jag of the hook in the shark's gullet to repeat the show which Bill had provided, only this time Bill would be watching him enact it from the beach.

From where he sat he could see the blue, shovel-shaped snout of the shark pointing seaward, the gray back bulging like a reef from the shallow water. For an instant a flash of hope steadied his pounding heart. Was it possible that the monster had succumbed to deadly rendings of the barbed hook?

The six fishermen stood waist-deep in the outrushing tide, the hooked line trailing loosely in the water. It needed but a slight jerk to galvanize the sulking shark to life. The *dhow*-captain spoke to Farland; his voice was persuasive, oily, yet his uplifted finger held a signal for the fishermen to jag hard.

"Put thy life before the dollars thou hast hidden, Christian. Quick, now, or I speak the word!"

A naked Arab, perched on the lookout yards of the *dhow*, whistled shrilly once, twice—and descended to the deck with the speed of a frightened ape. A plume of black smoke had risen across the southern horizon, blowing nearer with every breath from the gulf entrance.

The captain scanned the smoke-plume in fierce dismay. He snapped an obscene word to the gaping mob near the basin-edge. There followed a savage rush to gain the *dhow's* side.

The *dhow* took the wind sluggishly, while the crew poled her off the treacherous sandbars that appeared with the falling tide. A merciless sun blazed over the coast; the sea lay like the floor of a cloud all over the wide hollow in the west. In the silence that followed the clatter of the *dhow's* great sail, Farland found himself alone.

The taste of death was still in his mouth. His searching hands went out to the slack line which bound him to the sulking monster in the basin. The Arabs had taken his knife. A single cut would have severed the line. The wet knots bulged like the fists of a devil in the glaring sunlight. His fingers dug into them with maniac strength. But Muley had not been at sea without learning to hitch and splice or tie up a man with his own neck-cloth.

Sweat blinded Farland's face as he tore at the knots with his close-cut nails. He paused once to look at the tide and the livid hump of the man-eater swaying idly on its side. It was dead? Even a shark could not survive the hellish punishment inflicted by the murderous hook in its gullet. He might have guessed it.

He turned warily in the direction of the sandbag pier. "Bill!" His voice cracked strangely in the hot air. "Hi, Bill!"

The bulldog rose from the sand and trotted to his side, snuffling and caressing his hand with his cool wet muzzle. "Good old Bill!" Farland patted his sides with a shaking hand.

A SLIGHT rippling sound from the basin turned him sharply. The livid hump had straightened; an electric quiver flashed through its ugly length. Half turning on its side, it executed a torpedolike rush toward the shallow tide-entrance.

It was as if a typhoon had licked Farland through the air. He struck the water feet first and for eight seconds was torn around in a millwheel of foam that blinded and choked. In the center of the millwheel of blood and brine, his feet touched bottom. The shark had grounded on the bar at the basin's mouth.

Shaking the water from his eyes, Farland took breath. A dozen feet away the blue shovel-snout bored and rooted against the immovable bar, the great fins glistening in the sunlight. Drifting side-on to the bar it sought cunningly to float out with the now racing tide. Farland cursed Muley's inhuman knots, for he divined instantly that the monster's next effort might succeed. The departure of the line-holders had given it a free hand. He had known such brutes to jump and flail their way to open water.

"Head him off, Bill! Tool him round. Up, boy, up!"

Farland was not anxious to save his own skin at the risk of his old camp friend. He required only a few precious seconds to unravel Muley's finger-splitting knots. Only a few seconds. The slave-runners had evidently dealt with poor Conor.

"Head him off, Bill!"

For a thousand years or so Bill's ancestors had lived and thrived according to their ability to hold Kent and Suffolk bulls by the nostrils until the horned king of the herd collapsed from sheer suffocation and exhaustion. Bill's response to Farland's appeal was a flying leap that took him into the center of the basin, landing him within a foot of the shark's bladelike side-fin. The blue, snapping head in its efforts to bore through the bar was not unconscious of the bulldog's proximity. Again it essayed a rush at the bar only to recoil like a water-logged dinghy, the blue snout upthrust in the glare of the sun.

The backwash from its saber-fins drew Bill under the upturned snout. A foot and a half below the snout was a gaping chasm of teeth that would have reduced shin-bones to pulp. To the watching Farland it looked as though Bill was bound for the chasm. Grip saved the bulldog, a bear-trap clutch on the point of the protruding snout.

"You'll be chawed flat, Bill!" Farland yelled, his fingers well into the water-splayed knots. "You old fool, let go!"

The bulldog had a recollection of having been bashed hither and yon at the end of a lariat. He discovered in his ecstasy that the cone of the man-eater's snout was soft gristle to his teeth. He was also aware of the insecurity of his position and the nearness of the pulping house. The blue head was still able to submerge to the depth of a foot, and that pulping house was there if he let go.

"You blasted son of a tripe-hound, I didn't ask you to sit up there!" Farland lamented, fully alive to the dog's danger.

The snout dipped in a violent storm of brine and mud, and Bill missed the slippery resting place where his feet had bunched. He tasted the bitter wash squirting through his clenched jaws as the tide covered him.

FARLAND paused in his efforts to loosen the knots, to watch the finish of the dog he was powerless to help. The blue snout rose, spraying foam and blood as it plunged over and down in the tide with Bill clamped on the lee-side of the chasm. And again Bill was smothered and shaken across the big brine bath as the shark bucked and floundered on the bar. At one moment a long wave swung in, allowing the monster a complete turn on its side. The chasm of teeth closed with a jar. Bill cleared it but felt that another wave would soak him for the last time.

"You hold on now!" Farland called. "He'll shave you in half if you quit!"

Farland had released the noose that knotted him to the swishing, gyrating rope. Wading across the basin, he grabbed the submerged line which still held the hook in the shark's jaw. Flinging his weight against it, he was able to steer for a moment the plunging shovel-pointed head.

"Quit, Bill—quit!" he volleyed. "Time to be moving the other way. Pull out!"

With the renewed pressure of the hook, the shark's curved length sprang clear of the tide, the shovel-head jolting backward in the form of an arc. Then it straightened with the speed of an electric bolt. Bill experienced a jerk equal to the kick of a five-inch gun. He flew past Farland with several pounds of gristle between his locked teeth.

"You're the luckiest dog this side of the war!" Farland growled, as he sprang clear of the slashing hook-line. Bill stared pensively from the beach at the foam-lashed basin and the ragged blue snout beating hopelessly against the bar; then he reluctantly trotted after Farland.

On the hill they found Conor, lying on the floor of the tent, roped hand and foot. A pen-knife in a hidden pocket of Conor's coat severed the cords. Everything of value had been taken; the tent alone remained, together with the theodolite which the slave-runners had viewed with suspicion. Conor swore as he kicked himself free.

In the clear, hot air they observed the *dhow* beating against the wind, a couple of miles to the north. The cause of her desperate haste was soon manifest. A gun-flash lit the black smoke-plume in the south; a spout of water showed on the *dhow's* port side. Her course was changed with alarming suddenness.

From the murk of the coal-fumes the steel-gray foot of a cruiser appeared. A second and third lightning flash followed. The *dhow* tacked and came against the wind, leaving her huge lateen sail broadside on. The sun caught it in a spotlight for ten excruciating seconds. The white men behind the cruiser's lightning took note.

A fourth shot opened a red wound in the great sail; another split the greasy hull like the stroke of an ax. For fifty seconds after, the opalescent sea was disturbed by clutching hands and black bobbing heads. In a little while the pearly gray levels resumed their morning splendor.

The cruiser ran by and, observing nothing living or dead, went her way. But her captain reported later that the *dhow* fitted the description of one run by the notorious Ishmael Abdul, man-stealer and pirate.

"These Arabs," Conor said maliciously, "are the last of the earth's great men."

"Cut it out," Farland growled, leading the way to the beach. "It took me and Bill to steer that little feller into the mush."

He pointed to the almost empty basin and the livid outline sprawling under the sandbar.

Bill stretched himself on the warm beach and blinked at the outgoing tide.

Handicapped

By

Katharine Reynolds

ILLUSTRATED BY R. F. JAMES

THE girl's name was Anne, and she was not especially beautiful. She was brave, and she did her best to be wise. There are thousands like her in every city in the world. That's why the world keeps on enduring.

There was only one thing about Anne that made her different from other girls. Her left arm was cut off at the shoulder. At twenty-five Anne had been one of those fragrantly clean women in the ever lovely uniform of service. She was a nurse, and she then had two strong capable arms.

One day somebody, whom Anne never knew, sinned. Somebody else blundered, and it may be that Anne was a little more tired than usual and a little less careful. At any rate, because of a chain of trivial causes over which Anne had scarcely any control, the thing happened and Anne's arm was cut off at the shoulder.

Anne was brave. Courage was a part of her nature. She was, moreover, a nurse by profession. Sickness, weakness and all manner of deficiencies were to her everyday matters. So it may be that she felt the loss of that arm a little less keenly than would a girl with a different nature and training. Yet even Anne's nature and all her training could not keep her heart from fear, the terrifying, bitter fear of helplessness.

But the business of a nurse is to be useful and cheerful. So Anne went back to nursing with one arm, and smiling in an infinitely sweeter way. She devised for herself wonderful dresses so cunningly constructed that they hid her loss from the crowd. People meeting her casually never knew of her misfortune.

Nobody ever saw her grieve, heard one murmur of complaint. Only now and then when she was unusually tired, Anne's eyes would have a hunted look as if she were seeking refuge during these spells of weariness—perhaps seeking some one, some thing to lean on for strength and support.

However, Anne was young, and but for her lost arm a naturally attractive woman. And she knew how to dress. Most nurses do. It was therefore not at all strange that at least two men should love her in spite of her misfortune.

If you stop to think a minute, you will realize that only two types of men would love Anne in a way that could wholly satisfy her and tempt her to love back. One would be the man who was so powerfully strong, so rich in body himself, that his natural impulse would be to share his strength with her, shield with it her helplessness. And the other would be the man who, more or less helpless himself, could feel keenly her need of love, care and protection. The third man, the average, normal man, might and would admire Anne immensely, might wish to serve her; but such a one would never make the mistake of wanting to marry her. Normal people are cautious, rigidly conventional and averse to doing anything out of the ordinary.

And because things are run in this world on these invisible, simple and logical lines, that is just what happened.

ONE day when the hospital was full and every nurse doing the work of three, there was brought to the accident-ward a veritable Hercules—but a Hercules very much in need of patching. It was an ordinary enough case, with a wholly inglorious story. He was a teamster and he had been drunk.

He was assigned to Anne. His injuries were not necessarily dangerous, but might prove so if he did not have the best of care. Anne was careful. She had bitter reason for knowing the worth of exquisite care. No nurse in that hospital, unless it was the youngest in her first cap, gave such service as Anne gave. For there was always at her heart that fear of helplessness. For when that arm went off, it took with it all the rosy future that Anne, like other girls, had painted with brushes streaming with color and glad hopes. For Anne this glorious future had cooled and faded to a wistful, twilight gray, through which perhaps a faint, far-off star shone now and then. But it was a star that Anne could in no way be sure of; so Anne was painfully careful, as women with gray, twilight futures always are.

It was not long before the battered giant came to his senses. A little later he grew well enough to want to get up. But this was the one thing which he was not to do. It was the nurse's business to see that he didn't do it. His own sickness never appeals to a strong man. This one refused to believe what the nurse told him. He threatened, insisted and finally attempted to get up.

Now, a nurse's code of service says that there is no limit to the things she may and must do to save a patient's life. So when Anne saw that no word of hers could or would stop the rash man, she did something she had never done before—something she could never have believed she could do. Perhaps it was the sight of so glorious a body willfully marring itself, little knowing what bitterness lay in wait. Perhaps it was just the mother-love that women such as Anne have stored within them for the service of the race. At any rate, when her patient caught at the sides of the bed to raise himself, Anne threw back the cape that now always hung about her shoulders. And she let him look at that empty sleeve, the mutilated stump of shoulder.

It stopped him as she knew it would.

"I have only one arm," she told him softly. "I cannot hold you, if you persist in getting up. And all the other nurses and attendants are busy. If you do get up, you will die or at best be a lifelong invalid. This is true, believe me, in spite of the fact that in three weeks, if you are patient, you will be as well as ever. If you die or are crippled, I shall be blamed. I may even lose my work. Life is hard enough for me as it is. I am doing my best to serve you. Wont you make it a little easier for me?"

No man ever asked help of Bob Stevens who did not get it. Now this glorious giant stared at the girl's empty sleeve and then lay back, dumb with a strong man's sympathy. There was contrition and something else in his eyes, something that was awe and admiration, but mostly admiration.

It was that, I think, that did it. For every woman wants and really needs admiration to grow to her full stature. Anne was no exception. She had had just enough of it before her accident to know the delicious joy of it. But since she had been wearing the little cape about her shoulders, she had avoided men's eyes—and women's too, for that matter.

Few people have any sort of control over their eyes and so record their emotions crudely. And pity, when crudely expressed, can be a very unlovely and undesirable feeling to arouse in your fellow-men. But there was no pity in Bob's eyes. Anne saw that, and unconsciously her heart went out to him. He saw that stump of shoulder, yet did not shrink from her. It was one of her tired times, and for the moment, at least, the big man's look was comforting.

THAT, then, was the way it began. Anne, of course, never dreamed of marriage when she gave Bob Stevens that first smile. But Bob did. It is never hard, so they say, for a sick man to fall in love with his nurse. It was no trouble at all for Bob. He even went so far as to tell himself that he preferred her with her arm gone. This feeling was sincere and wholly consistent. To a physical giant, strength and size is a commonplace matter. He

It was not long before the battered giant came to his senses. A little later he grew well enough to want to get up. But this was the one thing he was not to do. It was the nurse's business to see that he didn't do it.

is apt to bend the knee to mental and spiritual power. It was Anne's sweet heart, her sane, cool mind, her calm courage, that made lovable her maimed body. Any man, had you given him time enough, could have loved Anne. This one didn't need time. He rushed her.

At first Anne thought it was the usual thing, the result of a weary, sick man's fancy. And like a wise nurse, she received it as she had been trained to do. But she soon saw that the big fellow was in earnest. He no longer cared to get up. He was content to lie there and wait for her, look at her, to have her near. He made her work as easy as he could. And he never made the blunder that big men so often make—he was never rough in his love-making, never touched her or even asked a favor. Nor was this strategy, the shrewd cunning of love. Bob was too used to reaching up and out and taking what he wanted. Strategy was foreign to his nature. It was reverence, the fine reverence that goes with love. And it had its effect.

Anne grew thoughtful and quiet. When first the thought of this possible marriage pierced her consciousness, her heart gave a queer ache. A teamster? For a moment the old rosy future that she thought she had rubbed from the canvas flushed her heart once again. But the taste of those memories was bitter as gall. So she just put them by. What would you? Can a one-armed girl choose?

So instead she thought a little hungrily of a small home nook, a cozy, safe shelter from the curious eyes of the crowd and the merciless beat of life on the naked streets that would each day grow for her more merciless. A young girl maimed wins sympathy. A woman old and worn? Bravely Anne thought it out. It was not the gift she had expected from life, but it was a gift nevertheless. This she realized, and was grateful.

She promised nothing, however, and the big man was too kind to bother her much. He merely took possession quietly, thoughtfully. He thought he had won. He did not know that in this case he must win not only the woman but the nurse to his cause. For what Anne the handicapped woman was willing to give, the cool-eyed, stern nurse who had for some years looked at the seamy underside of life and its raw, ragged edges, would not give.

There was no hiding the fact that Bob drank, and rather heavily. And to make matters worse, Anne discovered that Bob's father, grandfather and two uncles had died of drink. You see, in Bob's case too somebody blundered. Somebody back there in some way thwarted one of those physical princes who were Bob's ancestors. Somebody denied one of them the work his mind and body craved, or the right kind of food, or the girl he loved; and with a few other trivial circumstances thrown in, that was enough to knock the strapping boy out of his stride. He stumbled. And now it was taken as a matter of course that Bob's family must always have its drunkards. In Bob's generation it was Bob who was paying the penalty, the price exacted for those blunders and selfish lack of self-control. So Bob, a glorious figure of a man, was handicapped.

Naturally, Anne the nurse hesitated. If love only ended with oneself— But it went on and on, and if you did wrong, generations later innocent, helpless little children suffered, paid the price. Anne knew. She had her days in the children's ward. She knew of the blind, the twisted, the deformed, the disease-eaten little sufferers for whom there was no hope and no relief but death.

Once when she was a very young nurse indeed, she had pleaded tearfully with one of her patients, a girl whose youth lay tarnished in her eyes and whose cheek could never again know the sweet freshness of a blush. The girl listened wistfully for a few minutes, then smiled wearily and laughed:

"Say, kid, you're sweet and nice, but you're wasting your time. I could have been just as sweet and nice as you if only I had let the drink alone. But I couldn't, and I can't now. Why, say—my father and mother was both drunk the night I was born. Can you beat it?"

Oh, Anne knew. So she hesitated. And that gave the other man a chance to come up.

ALL that Bob Stevens was, John Leaver was not. Slim, with no body to speak of, he yet held you in a way that big, magnificent Bob never could. There was a downward, humorous slant to John's upper eyelid, a twinkle to his blue, blue eye, and a quirk to the corners of his lips that set you to smiling the minute you looked at him. And when, loving him so soon, you studied him closer to see why he was so winning, you saw that under that droll, insignificant sunny exterior lay the big manhood, the fine gameness of a handicapped fighter. For John Leaver was handicapped even as were Anne and Bob.

Somebody in a swampy bit of Indiana once neglected a cold. And somebody else wouldn't keep the windows open nights or eat right or rest a bit now and then, and a still more foolish person made the mistake of moving to the city when he should have stayed in the country. So because of all these little trifles John Leaver, who had the spirit of a Samson, had the body of an undersized seventeen-year-old boy, and a pair of lungs that even at the age of thirty hadn't learned their business.

It was Bob who first brought John Leaver to Anne. One morning Bob's team was standing in front of a West Side saloon while Bob was inside paying toll for the sins of his ancestors. Something scared the animals, and Bob came out just in time to see a nimble bit of humanity jump for the bits.

It didn't amount to anything much in the end, for Bob had a long reach and huge iron muscles. But an hour after the insignificant event was over, the nimble bit of humanity was still coughing himself black in the face. So Bob lifted him into the truck and took him to a drug-store.

When the druggist soothed him down so that Bob could see what the chap really looked like, the big fellow looked down at the little one and loved him.

That being the case, the natural thing to do was to show him to Anne. And it was in no way Anne's fault that she too loved him. For Anne was quick to see that this man with no muscle to back him up, and on a miserable and weak stomach, was stubbornly and eternally fighting the curse that had been laid upon him, fighting it by refusing to be handicapped—which is not always the wisest way of fighting this particular curse.

It was because he needed to be taught how best to fight his trouble, and because she knew how to teach him this, that Anne came to love him. Just as big Bob had given her understanding sympathy and she had not judged him harshly, so this other man's need called her. That was how it happened that Anne came to love both men sincerely.

NOW Bob had said nothing to John Leaver about Anne and himself. Both men went to see her, were treated alike and came home together. Bob was one of those simple, unselfish souls to whom love comes in so nearly pure a flame that it alone satisfies. He made no demands on Anne. As she herself had once told him, her life was hard enough. He did not want to make it harder. So he just loved her. And some day when she got ready, he wanted to have the sole care of her.

He had mentioned this to Anne often enough, so that he was sure she understood. He never mentioned the matter to John Leaver or anyone else, because he thought that all the world, including John, knew it just by looking at him.

And so it would have, had it looked at Bob. But John Leaver didn't happen to look at Bob when they were visiting Anne. John was always too busy looking at Anne. And so in perfect innocence he brought about the strange ending.

They were walking home from a Sunday visit to Anne. Bob had been sober for two months, and John, because of following Anne's careful instructions, was feeling better than he had ever felt in his life. The June night was just dark enough to hide all the ugliness and dust of everyday living, and so softly lovely as to fool you into thinking it wasn't there.

In the end Bob picked him up and carried him to a park bench. And he was so bad that there was no use trying to talk it over that night.

And through this soft dusk and starshine John Leaver made his prayer:

"Some day, if God is good and fair, I'm going to marry Anne Sherwood."

And the next thing he knew, he was lying under a lamp-post, and big Bob, white as a ghost and hoarse as a crow, was saying over him:

"Heavens, Johnny, this wont do. We can't fight like this. Why, Anne aint no woman to make trouble like this between friends. Johnny, for heaven's sake, stand up and let's talk it over. I haven't—oh, Lord—Johnny, I haven't killed you, have I?"

At that John Leaver laughed.

"Oh, shut up, you big sledge-hammer—no! *I'm* not dead, but this miserable carcass of mine—"

He began coughing then, and in the end Bob picked him up in his arms and carried him half a block to a park bench. And he was so bad that there was no use trying to talk the matter over that night.

But a week later they met and went at the matter soberly. And being decent, honest, average men, they came to this conclusion—that neither of them was fit to marry Anne Sherwood.

"I," bitterly said John Leaver, "am just a microscopic bit of human waste. You, Bob Stevens, are a man built in God's own image—but a man who, when he was drunk, might strike that poor girl dead."

At that, Bob Stevens rose unsteadily to his feet, blue-lipped and cold to his finger-tips.

"Not that, Johnny—*no!* I'd never do that."

But by the horror in Bob's eyes, John Leaver knew that the big man could not be sure, would never be sure. That, then, was the result of their conference.

THE day after this conference, Bob Stevens went out on a three-week spree, and John Leaver walked for hours through a cold night rain. And they were both so sick for a time that they thought they would most surely die. That sobered them and made them wise. So, when they were able to do so, they went together to Anne Sherwood and made a clean breast of the whole thing. There and then each man in the presence of the other declared his love and made his renunciation.

And all the while Anne Sherwood stood over them, her cheeks wan and sweet as a fading moon, but her eyes glowing with a misty beauty that dazzled them and somehow melted from their hearts the awful knowledge that in a world of men they yet were not and could never be men.

To Anne Sherwood, however, they were men and more. Oh, the dreams she had laid by! Were they any lovelier than this gift that life was making her now? Homeless she might be in her old age,—childless and alone,—but loveless never. Two men had loved her and loved her nobly. What more could mortal woman ask?

But they were waiting, these two, for the comfort their hearts craved and they themselves could not find. So, then, Anne came out of her great hour and gave it to them—gave them the only thing it was in her power to give them. She too made her renunciation.

"I am so glad you understand," she said softly. "For us three, you know, there can be no love but this that we have for each other. For I love you even as you love me. If we three who are so handicapped are big enough to pay the debt in full, then this suffering will die with us. And in the years to come there will be fewer—defectives. And surely love can be beautiful even if it doesn't end in marriage."

So if you ever see on the street anywhere a big man with thick hair of iron gray, and a little chap with hair thin at the temples, and a sweet, straight medium-sized woman with eyes aglow, whose nurses' cape the wind never somehow can blow loose on the left side, don't stare—only raise your hat—O cynic! For that is one of life's great love-stories going by.

The Giant Footprints

A NEW EXPLOIT OF DETECTIVE MASTERS

By Anthony M. Rud

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

I HAD finished painting the Illman group, and I was itching for excitement and change, but even I did not suspect that Jigger Masters would have so much of it ready and waiting for me. It was my third visit to his apartments—and it came near being my last.

"Come in! Hold your hands above your head! Walk slowly, or I'll empty this automatic into you!"

This was my greeting. Masters sounded determined and gruff; so I chose to obey. Pushing the door wide open with the toe of my shoe, I crossed the threshold in the desired attitude, albeit grinning disrespectfully into the mouths of two very capable pistols.

"Don't let one of your fingers twitch!' I cautioned.

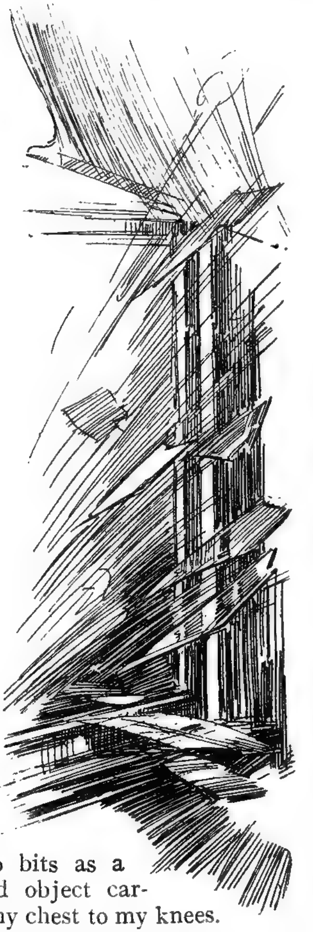
"Fool!" exploded Masters, putting down the weapons and rising awkwardly from his defensive position behind the desk. "From now on, when you break in on me, either knock or whistle! I'm shooting first and asking questions afterward nowadays!" He yanked out his swivel-chair and spread his lean anatomy over the seat and arms, jerking his thumb in the direction of the only other chair he possessed, a sway-backed contraption of wood and wicker.

"May I take them down now?" I queried in mock trepidation, seating myself gingerly. I was inclined to make light of the heroics in spite of my knowledge of my friend's constitutional seriousness.

"Yes," acceded Masters gruffly. "You'll need them if you stay."

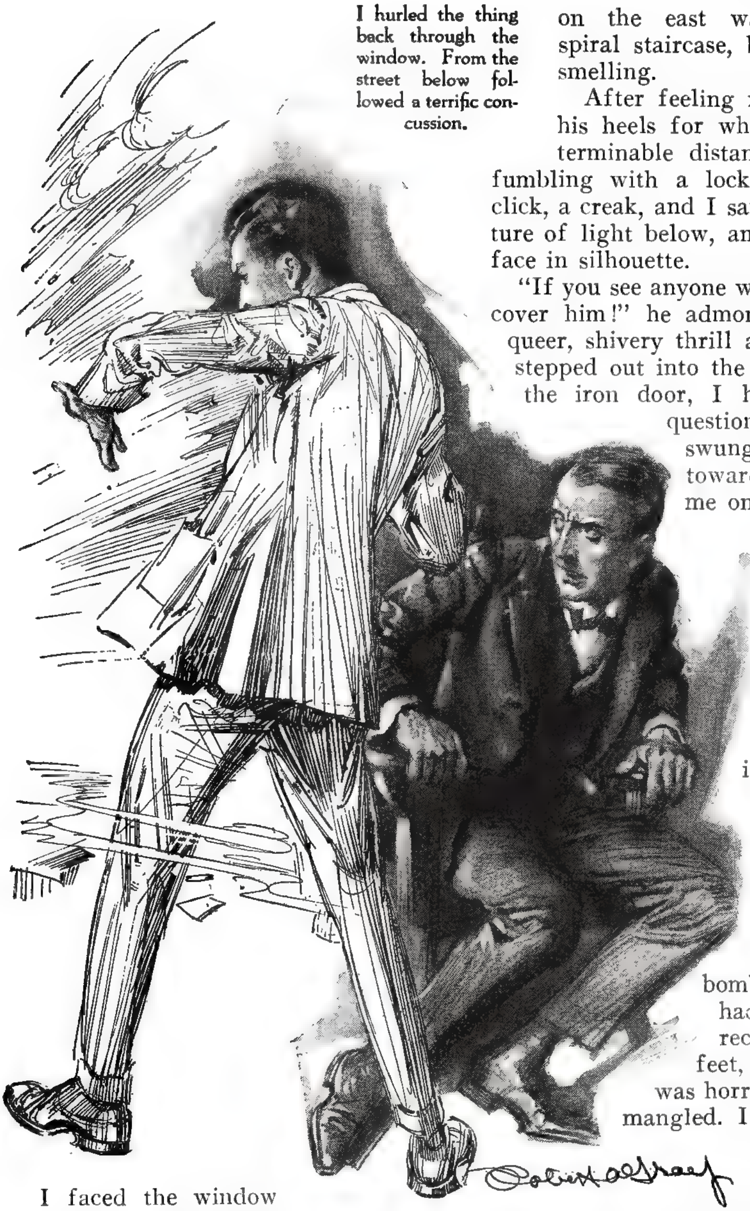
Crash!

The pane of glass in front of me splintered to bits as a heavy, round object caromed from my chest to my knees. Involuntarily I seized it, and my eyes popped nearly from their sockets. *It was a hand-grenade with the smoking fuse burned nearly to the powder!* With a convulsive movement I hurled the thing back through the window. From the street below followed a terrific concussion that smashed in the rest of the glass of the window.



As I jumped to the jagged opening, I had a momentary glimpse of a struggling horse in the midst of a black, round cloud of smoke. At that second Masters dragged me back.

"There may be more coming," he said in a calm tone.



I hurled the thing back through the window. From the street below followed a terrific concussion.

I faced the window hurriedly. "Nice quiet little nest you have here! What is it all about, anyway?"

He pressed one of the automatics into my hand and wheeled about. "Time enough to explain later! Come on!" To my surprise, for I had not suspected the existence of any other doors than the one through which I had come,—he pushed aside the tawdry gilt mirror which hung on the east wall, revealing a spiral staircase, black and musty-smelling.

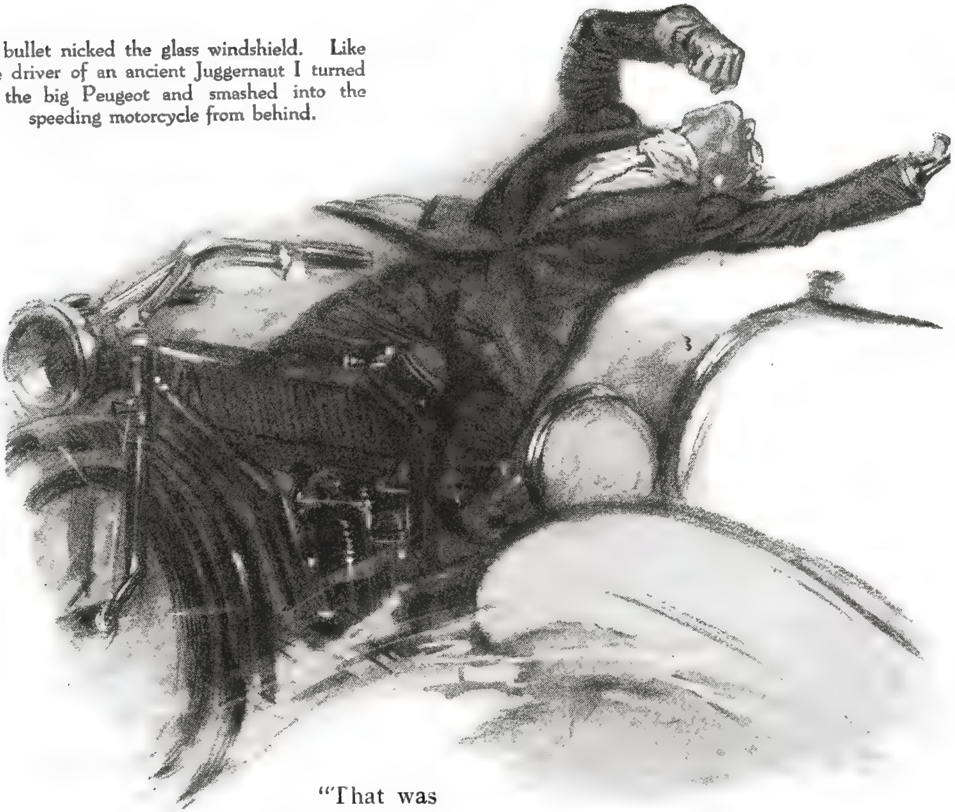
After feeling my way down at his heels for what seemed an interminable distance, I heard him fumbling with a lock. Then came a click, a creak, and I saw a narrow aperture of light below, and Masters' eager face in silhouette.

"If you see anyone with *immense feet,* cover him!" he admonished. I had a queer, shivery thrill at this, but as he stepped out into the court and closed the iron door, I had no time for questions. Masters swung out immediately toward the street, with me on his heels.

A crowd had gathered already, and was packed four or five deep around some object on the pavement. After a minute's elbowing, Masters and I got close enough to see that it was a horse, lying huddled on the asphalt.

Apparently the bomb I had thrown had exploded directly beneath its feet, for the animal was horribly distorted and mangled. Its owner, a Greek fruit-peddler, had been so overcome by the catastrophe that he was unable even to loosen the traces, but sat on the pavement, alternately bemoaning his loss and cursing in his native tongue.

After a quick survey of the crowd, which seemed to be the ordinary riffraff that always gathers about a street-accident, I saw Masters motion to me. I followed him to the outside of the circle, where he stopped a moment to jot a memorandum in his notebook.



A bullet nicked the glass windshield. Like the driver of an ancient Juggernaut I turned in the big Peugeot and smashed into the speeding motorcycle from behind.

"That was meant for us," he whispered. "I'll send the poor devil a check to cover the loss of his horse; guess I owe that much of a votive offering to my god of luck. *Say!*"

He stopped dead in his tracks and faced me, a frown of beginning exasperation wrinkling the folds of loose skin on his forehead. Gripping me by the arm, he led me back slowly toward the apartment-building we just had quitted. "I—I must confess, Hoffman," he said at length, "that I was a trifle rattled. Did you, by any chance, notice that bomb particularly before it left your hands?"

I smiled wryly. "Yes, I saw that it was lighted. That was all. Then I think that I must have started to pray."

"But did you notice anything else?" persisted Masters. "I couldn't swear to it now, but it seems to me that there was a piece of string—"

"White string, about a foot long!" I interrupted. "Yes, I remember it now."

Masters nodded shortly, and the corners of his wide mouth drew down a fraction of an inch. I knew the expression; it was his way of expressing disgust. In a weaker man the same feeling would have called forth curses.

Without further parley he turned in at the door of the apartment-building adjoining ours, and after ringing the bell held a short conversation with the janitor, and entered.

Three flights of stairs led us to the top floor, and there we found a ladder. This was built against the wall and reached to the ceiling. Above it was a trapdoor leading to the gravel roof. Without a word Masters climbed, threw open the trap and jumped out.

I followed in time to hear him utter an exclamation of satisfaction. "See this, Bert!" he cried, picking up a long bamboo fishpole from the gravel. Three feet of white string still dangled from the end.

"This is the way he sent us our little present. He tied it to the pole, lighted the fuse and then swung it out across the space between the apartments. When he thought the fuse was about gone, he oscillated the pole. The weight of the bomb threw it through the window-glass and at the same time broke the cord.

I shuddered at the remembrance of the missile landing in my lap. "He didn't miss his calculations by very much!"

"No," answered Masters abstractedly, "not very far, but a miss is—"

He did not finish. I saw him take a hand-lens from his hip pocket and bend down to the gravel. Without speaking, he examined the surface of the roof for nearly ten minutes. Finally, as he had worked his way nearly to the edge of the roof, I heard him chuckle.

"Yes, it's the same one," he muttered half to himself. "See here, Bert: you wont believe it, but I've got his footprint! Look through this glass!"

As I followed directions, he pointed with his index finger at a slight breaking of the surface where a bit of sand mingled with the gravel. As I squinted through the lens, his finger traced a line that led far backward.

"Not all that!" I exclaimed, remembering with a nervous thrill that Masters had spoken of immense feet.

"All that!" he answered emphatically. "That's the size of the fellow's foot, whether you choose to believe it or not!"

"But that is nearly two feet!" I gasped. "No living person wears shoes that size."

Masters smiled mysteriously. "No, even I will admit that! Although this medium does not show it well, the person who threw that bomb was *without* shoes; *the print is made by a bare foot, sixteen or seventeen inches long!"*

In spite of my knowledge of Masters' lack of exaggeration, I scarcely could repress my incredulity.

"Did you read anything of the Stanwood murder?" he inquired tartly.

I shook my head, glad of the slight shift of topic. "When I am painting, Jigger, I read nothing but the editorials and the sporting-page. Regular news gets me too excited. I must have missed it—the Stanhope affair, I mean."

"Stanwood," corrected Masters. He turned to the trapdoor. "I'll tell you all about it on the train, if you care to come along. I'm going to the suburbs for a short trip."

"Count me in!" I cried cheerfully.

The prospect of more real excitement was entirely too much for my prudence.

AN hour later, as we pulled out of the station, Masters drew a clipping from his pocket. "This will give you the fully decorated facts," he remarked, handing it to me.

I unfolded the sheet, and a scarehead story I had skipped in the daily paper met my eye.

GHASTLY MURDER AT ASBURNHAM

MILLIONAIRE STANWOOD FOUND WITH HEAD NEARLY SEVERED—SUSPECT GIANT NEGRO

A barefooted fiend, wielding a razor-edged knife, last night committed one of the most brutal murders on record in New York State. Lester Maxwell Stanwood, the millionaire broker and clubman, was the victim.

According to the stories told by the servants at Cheshire Hills, the Stanwood country estate where Stanwood was staying preparatory to leaving for his summer outing with his wife and family in the Berkshires, Stanwood had seemed uneasy and irritable at the dinner table on the evening preceding the crime. He had instructed Segrue, the gardener, to fasten the huge iron gates and to loose his two huge mastiffs, Justinian and Theodora. He had spent an hour after dinner directing the packing of his trunks, and then had retired to his study and closed the door. He had appeared twice after that before the servants retired, once to ask Merkel, the house man, if anyone had attempted to see him, and the second time to make sure that his orders in regard to the gates and the dogs had been followed. Then he had gone back to his room, and nothing further had been heard from his part of the house.

In the morning Merkel attempted to waken Stanwood at nine o'clock, but found the room empty and the bed undisturbed. Alarmed, he had made directly for the study, where he found Stanwood slouched on the floor in a pool of his own blood, and with his head partially detached from his body by some edged instrument.

Merkel had aroused the household by his terrified screams, and then had fled, carrying his tale of horror to the Asburnham police station. A detail was sent out immediately to the scene of the crime, and a posse organized to search the surrounding woods for the murderer, for suicide was plainly out of the question.

Sergeant Hadley, in charge at Asburnham, visited the Stanwood home with Becker, a plain-clothes man. The first and most important clue they discovered was a set of footprints leading from the pool of blood directly across the rugs and bare floor to the doorway. The peculiar and immensely important fact about these footprints is that they were made by an abnormal foot—sixteen inches long from heel to big toe, and shaped more like the hand of a gigantic simian than like an Aryan foot. Becker pronounced it immediately the foot of a giant negro.

"That's far enough," broke in Masters, seeing that I had read the essentials. "The rest of it is mere imagination."

"That is horrible, grotesque!" I exclaimed, handing back the clipping. "There isn't any creature living to-day which possesses a foot sixteen inches long, is there?"

Masters smiled enigmatically. "I told Hadley that, but both he and Becker swear by all that is holy that we are looking for a giant."

"Well, it's spooky enough to give *me* the creeps!"

"Yes," said Masters slowly, "it does seem that way. The footprints were there all right, and plain enough—*too plain!*"

"What do you mean by that?"

Masters shook his head. "It looks like a signature, Bert! If I hadn't seen the print in the gravel back there in the city, I wouldn't believe anyone had such feet. I'd call it either a deliberate blind or else the seal of a revenge."

"Had Stanwood any enemies?"

"Yes, one at least. His name is Parker; he lived on a farm back about three miles from Asburnham, but he disappeared a day or two before the murder occurred. He seemed to have had mysterious monthly conferences with Stanwood at which they often quarreled violently."

"Fairly obvious, then, I should say."

Masters looked as nearly uncomfortable as lay within the realm of possibility for him. "Ye-e-s, it does," he admitted. "In the ordinary course of things Parker will, of course, be apprehended. He then will tell some wild story to account for his flight—"

"Or confess to the murder," I interrupted.

"No, he wont!" said Masters gravely but decidedly. "I'll admit to you, Bert, that I have led Becker, Hadley and the constables of a half-dozen towns to believe that I want Parker for Stanwood's killing, but I haven't the slightest idea in the world that Parker is guilty! I want to have him safely lodged in jail almost entirely *for his own sake!*"

"Then you're afraid this demon is after him too?"

"I have every reason to suspect that is the case. Parker may be safe where he is hiding, but I'd much rather have him locked up in the Tombs. I don't exaggerate, Bert, when I say that this criminal—or 'S' as I know him—is one of the most diabolical plotters it has ever been my misfortune to encounter. I think he has just cause for revenge against both Stanwood and Parker, and the experiences I have had with him thus far lead me to believe that he has an extraordinary ability."

"How did you hear of him first?"

Masters smiled. "I invented a fairy tale. You see, when I got to Asburnham, Mrs. Stanwood and her two daughters had arrived. She is a fussy, society-loving old lady, and the girls are just as finicky. They were properly horrified at what had occurred, of course, but were not at all enthusiastic about an inquest and an investigation of the case. They professed themselves willing to have the police take charge, but were going to bar me from the premises. I pointed out to the chilly Mrs. Stanwood the one strange fact about the whole thing—namely, that through it all the two huge mastiffs had roamed at large on the fenced-in grounds, and that no one could have entered or left without first silencing the dogs or being attacked. I showed her that the dogs were unharmed; the servants testified that the animals had made no noise; and I hinted darkly that the murderer must therefore have remained inside the house. Rot, of course, but you should have seen those women depart! They scarcely were willing to wait for their hats!"

"I can't quite see—" I began.

"How this has to do with the mysterious 'S'?" Masters smiled. "The only thing I could get out of Mrs. Stanwood that seemed to pertain in any way to the murder was the fact that she had known her husband just twenty-three years, that he had come to New York from the West, and that she knew nothing about his life previous to that time. This made me slightly curious, and when I had a chance, I made for his study.

"There wasn't a thing there, however. It seemed that Stanwood's life began—so far as the records were concerned—at the time of his marriage. I found jottings of all kinds, mostly of financial deals, but nothing that I could fasten upon as furnishing any motive for murder.

"I didn't note it particularly then,—I'll tell you now to simplify matters,—but the name of this man Parker occurred nine times in the records, which I have little doubt were incomplete, at that.

"But my prize find was not in the study. I rooted around in every part of the house, and at last I located a small wall-safe in the attic. I asked the servants about it, but they knew nothing; so I used oxy-acetylene on it. This was all it contained:"

Masters drew from his breast pocket a small, battered notebook that once had been covered in bright red leather but now was shabby, stained and peeled from long and rough usage. Wondering just what the contents would reveal, I opened it. Page after page of the first part had been written with a soft pencil; time and rubbing had made it absolutely indecipherable. Even after I reached the fresher pages, I could make out little, however. *"Left Hon. May 16th with S. and P."* was the first entry that seemed at all intelligible. Then came masses of figures that resembled vaguely the entries in a ship's log, though done roughly and evidently by an amateur.

"We're coming to Asburnham," broke in Masters. "I'll simplify it for you. Over here a few pages *'P'* becomes *Parker*. 'S' never has his name spelled out. They refer to 'Oysters' five or six times. 'Arrived K' appears with a date that I can't make out. And over here at the back is an interesting entry, 'Left in sloop with P. S emptied revolvers but no damage.'

"As far as I can figure," continued Masters, speaking rapidly, "they were engaged in some queer enterprise off Oahu or Hawaii in the Hawaiian Islands somewhere. It sounds like pearl-fishing, only I never heard of any pearls coming from there. At any rate, they made money somehow, and then sailed off, leaving 'S' and the others behind. That part seems clear enough. There are a lot of other entries that I don't understand, however. They run like this, 'Four Kanakas,' and then 'Suspect B. He looks funny,' and then 'The whole bunch. Me for the States.' "

"Sounds like a conspiracy," I ventured.

Masters shook his head. "There are just two men alive who can tell us about it, and they are Parker and 'S.' If I'm not mistaken, we wont have to wait many hours out here before we get hold of one or both of them."

"Are we going to Cheshire Hills?" I queried, rising as the train slowed down.

"Just for a moment. We'll get one of the Stanwoods' cars and go out toward Parker's house."

AN unpleasant surprise was in store for us at Cheshire Hills, however. What must have been a beautiful country house was now ablaze from basement to garret.

Masters gave one low cry of surprise, but instead of making for the little crowd who were vainly trying to subdue the flames, he caught my arm and made me run with him to the garage.

"He thought to destroy all the evidence!" Masters growled. "He beat us here. There, take the big car! It's a Peugeot."

I swung open the huge doors. A whirl of the starter, and the magnificent motor responded. Masters swung himself into the seat beside me as the car bounded forth on the gravel roadway.

"First turn to the right!" snapped Masters. "Then keep on as far as the Pontypridd pike. Hang the speed-limits!"

It was my very first attempt at driving a car with four speeds; my little four-cylinder runabout could do only a chaste thirty-five miles an hour, but I knew the gear-shifting and the general details, and the magnificent machine under me almost ran itself. We reached thirty-five in the course of two hundred yards, and it did not impress me at all in the excitement of the moment.

"Let her out!" commanded Masters tersely, gripping the fore door and the back of the seat and leaning forward.

I complied, stepping on the gas until the smooth, silent motor in front of us transformed itself into a rushing tornado of Herculean endeavor. A bicyclist far ahead heard the cannonade of our approach and backed his flimsy machine far into the grassy ditch at the side of the road. In a sort of exalted bravado I jammed my left foot on the cut-out as we swirled by, and the answering super-salvo thrilled me to the very bone.

"Seventy-eight—*eighty!*" yelled Masters, almost in my ear. "Slow down now: First crossroad to the right!"

Reluctantly I removed my foot from the accelerator, and the big racer quieted down to a more ordinary rate of speed. The pike showed up before us a white lime-streak in the midst of fields of green, with a sparse line of poplars following its length into the distance.

"Now don't go over forty!" commanded my companion as we turned the corner. "I want to see the landscape."

He did not seem to be interested in the landscape, however, as we rushed along at the stipulated speed, but kept his gaze fastened on the roadway ahead.

"He may have escaped—I was slow," muttered Masters aloud to himself. I did not answer, but smiled grimly at the thought of our mad rush across fields and fences and the subsequent ride at race-track speed. If that were what he termed slow!

"That's where Parker lived until a month ago," commented Masters, indicating in a general way a cluster of cottages that stood near a heavy wood by the side of the pike. He has disappeared com— My God! It *was* Parker!" he exclaimed suddenly. "See that car?"

Far forward on the road I saw a small automobile drawn up at the side of the wood, and I slowed as we approached. Masters had drawn his revolvers and opened the fore door, ready to make a running attack. The car proved, however, to be empty.

"Stay here!" he commanded. "If he tries to get to the flivver, shoot—and shoot straight!" With that, Masters sprang from the running-board, climbed the fence and made off through the woods toward the cluster of cottages we had seen.

I felt distinct misgivings, in view of the threat that our quarry had made on Masters' life; yet I could do nothing but obey. Sliding out of my seat, I drew my revolvers and waited, facing the fence over which Masters had disappeared.

TEN minutes passed before Masters reappeared; I had begun to get very uneasy. Finally he came to the fence, however, and beckoned to me. I saw that his face was set and grave.

"Another murder!" he announced when I joined him. "I am going back and run over the ground a little more thoroughly. We have plenty time to get our man now."

"But isn't he after you too?" I queried anxiously, after we had passed into the wood and were threading our way through the thick brush.

"No, I don't think so!" he responded slowly. "I think his work is done, and I don't believe he will seek me out any further."

We came suddenly upon the scene of the tragedy. In a tiny glade carpeted with luxuriant grass upon which the sunlight fell checkered from the foliage overhead, lay what had once been a man. He lay crumpled up in a hideous heap on the grass, and simply saturated in his own blood. I made as if to straighten him, for I was curious to see his features, but Masters stopped me.

"It's just the same as the other," he said. "Only this time the murderer took the head off completely!" He pointed to the shrubbery a few paces beyond. There on the broken shaft of a sapling was transfixed a hideous, severed human head, smeared with the stains of fresh blood!

I started back with a gasp of horror, for though in my adventures with Masters we had encountered many repellent sights, nothing quite so grotesque, horrible and disgusting had occurred.

"Why, the face is *smiling!*" I cried, overcome for the moment.

Masters made some inarticulate comment and knelt beside the body.

"Here's 'Exhibit B,'" he said, indicating a bare spot near the pool of blood.

I pulled myself together and knelt down to look. As I followed Masters' pointing finger, I felt the icy chill of *fear* course down my spine! I veritably believe that my hair came as near to standing on end as lies within the possibilities. Printed plainly in red on the brown of the earth was the spoor of a gigantic human foot!

"It's nearly two feet long!" I cried aghast, feeling in my veins the curdling that the sanest man feels when he rubs elbows with unexplained horror. "Surely no man alive has feet like that!"

"No, you are right!" responded Masters slowly and gravely. "And look here again!"

This time he lifted the decapitated body and showed me the neck. "This has been done by some instrument that we never have run across before," he said, pointing to the ridges in the tissues. "The head was not struck off with a knife or hatchet, for the ridges run in concentric circles around the neck!"

"A strangler!" I cried, thinking of the bands of East Indian thugs that I had read of in my boyhood days.

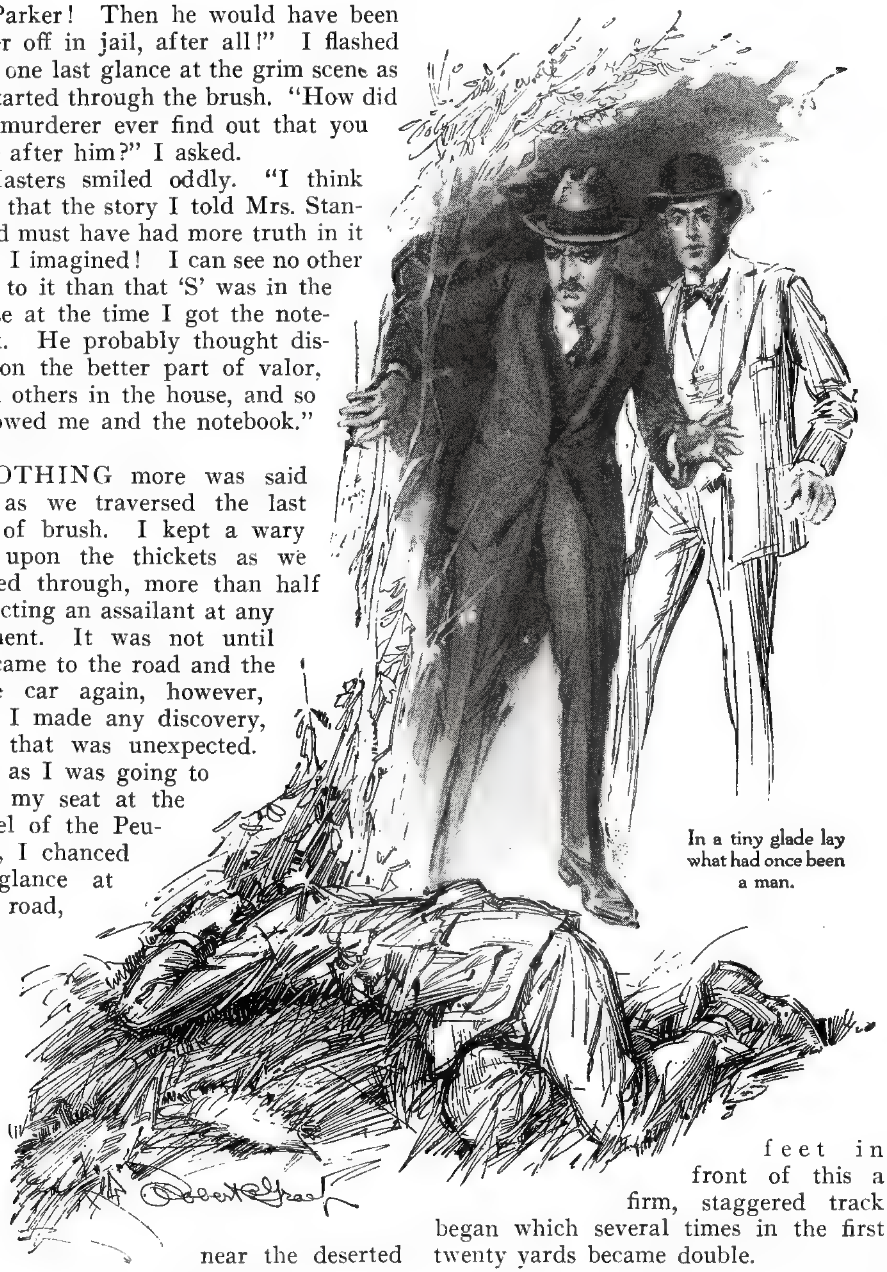
"Something like that," agreed Masters, "—only it looks as if the cord used was really edged steel wire. I think he used it looped like a lariat, threw it over the head of his unsuspecting victim and then proceeded in the double process of choking him and sawing off his head."

A premonitory faintness seized me; so I turned abruptly. "Who—who is the murdered man? Do you know?" I asked.

"Yes, I thought of course you knew. It's Parker."

"Parker! Then he would have been better off in jail, after all!" I flashed back one last glance at the grim scene as we started through the brush. "How did this murderer ever find out that you were after him?" I asked.

Masters smiled oddly. "I think now that the story I told Mrs. Stanwood must have had more truth in it than I imagined! I can see no other way to it than that 'S' was in the house at the time I got the notebook. He probably thought discretion the better part of valor, with others in the house, and so followed me and the notebook."



In a tiny glade lay what had once been a man.

NOTHING more was said as we traversed the last rod of brush. I kept a wary eye upon the thickets as we passed through, more than half expecting an assailant at any moment. It was not until we came to the road and the little car again, however, that I made any discovery, and that was unexpected. Just as I was going to take my seat at the wheel of the Peugeot, I chanced to glance at the road, near the deserted machine.

"Jigger!" I broke in sharply. "Look here!" I took his arm and led him a few yards down the road to a point where the white dust lay thick on the macadam road. I pointed out to him a strange hole, about one foot in length, scratched in the dust and macadam at right angles to the road itself. Two feet in front of this a firm, staggered track began which several times in the first twenty yards became double.

"He left in a motorcycle!" I said, a little pride unconsciously creeping into my voice at my discovery. "Carried in the back of his automobile, probably."

Masters gave a low whistle. "Bert," he said, "this is an amateur criminal we are after, but he could give pointers to the best of them!"

"Shall we follow?" I queried, excited.

"Yes!" answered Masters abruptly. "There are several crossroads to watch," he said, running up to the car. "Our only clue now is the track of his new tires. I'll ride on the bumper!"

Thus we started out, with Masters holding his place by clasping the lamp-brackets, and leaning forward the better to watch the flying macadam. I drove slowly at first, and then as realization dawned upon me that our quarry could not possibly carry his cycle up the high embankments that rose on either side, I let out the Peugeot. Masters must have suffered terribly from the speed and his cramped position, but he gave no sign.

As the first cross-pike came into view, Masters held up his hand. I understood, and throttled down the car to eight miles an hour. Masters jumped to the ground and hastily examined the crossing. I heard him give a yell of exultation, and stopped.

"Down this road!" yelled Masters, and I backed and turned around. As I threw in the clutch again, he jumped into the seat beside me.

"I'm on familiar ground now," he said. "Selkirk is the first town—fourteen miles. Drive like the devil!"

AS we sped onward I reviewed the probabilities. Masters evidently did not expect the murderer to turn again. We would doubtless find him stopping at Selkirk. It was long past lunch-time, and we might easily find him at the hotel.

Twenty minutes later we swung into the main street of the little town and made for the hotel. Just as we did so, a figure jumped from the piazza, mounted a red motorcycle in the street and was away like a flash.

"There! There!" cried Masters, but I needed no stimulus other than the sight of that red flash. The fever of the man-hunt was thrumming through my arteries, and our giant machine never felt the spur of a more enthusiastic driver.

Selkirk gaped vacantly as we swept through at sixty miles an hour, but fast as we were going, the red streak before us was traveling still faster.

"Let her out! Let her out!" cried Masters, almost beside himself.

I gritted my teeth, clung to the wheel with all my strength, and gave her the last ounce of gas and the last notch of spark. I had no eyes for the speedometer; all I could see was the winding ribbon of road that seemed to be shot under us as from a casting reel, and the red dot far in front. The fenders began to rattle with the terrible strain, but slowly I saw the red dot coming close, closer.

It all happened in an instant. With a rush we caught up to the cycle. A goggled face turned toward us; a gauntleted hand was raised; and a bullet nicked the glass wind-shield before us. Perhaps it was the speed that had gone to my brain, or perhaps the closeness of the shot had something to do with it, but something snapped inside of me, and like the driver of an ancient Juggernaut I turned in the big Peugeot and smashed into the speeding motorcycle from behind.

Metal ripped. I had a vision from the corner of my eye of a body hurtling through the air, and then I had my own hands full stopping the big car. We careened into the ditch, which luckily was shallow and grass-grown at that point. We bounded against a low fence of crossed timbers, but at that point I swerved the wheels toward the road again, and by sheer luck we managed to make it safely. Fifty yards farther on I brought the car to a stop, and Masters, revolver drawn, stepped unsteadily out.

An hundred yards back we found him—I almost said *it*. The collision and the force of his own speed had hurled him clear of the timber fence and far out into the plowed field. He was unconscious but still breathing when we got there.

Masters, to my surprise, held me back when I went to touch the huddled form, and handed me a pair of rough gloves.

"Put these on first!" he commanded, and though such action seemed incomprehensible to me, I obeyed.

"You'll see why!" was Masters' terse comment.

And I did! To my dying day I shall never forget the horrible sight that greeted my eyes when we straightened out the victim of my driving! The man, unconscious yet, seemed broken to a pulp. Both arms were smashed so badly that the bones were protruding through the skin, and one leg was doubled up under him.

Beside him on the ground lay two huge affairs, grotesquely resembling bare human feet, yet made to slip over shoes like a pair of rubbers. They were fashioned from solid rubber.

"The sixteen-inch feet!" I cried.

"Yes, and that's not all," said Masters, moving one of the inert arms with his toe. I looked and saw that the arms both ended at the wrists! To one was attached a clever mechanical hand, while the other ended in a strong, three-pronged hook.

His face was ghastly white, except for a purplish discoloration around the corners of the mouth and the eyelids, but the neck was tightly bandaged.

Masters bent over and thrust his hand into the side pocket of our victim's jacket. He drew it forth slowly and impressively, holding a thin steel wire about five feet in length. It was looped just as Masters had predicted, and was evidently the instrument that had caused the death of Stanwood and Parker.

"Well, you got me, didn't you, Mr. Sleuth-hound?" Masters and I jumped as if we had been detected in some illegal act. The cold black eyes were not opened widely, but there was not the slightest pretense of unconsciousness.

MASTERS' hand went for his revolver, and at that a flicker of a smile played over the hideous features of the man on the ground.

"Afraid of me even when my back is broken, eh? Well, I don't know as I blame you. I pretty near got you once."

"Yes, that bomb!" Masters smiled grimly.

"But I don't care now," continued the man more weakly. "I did my job up just as I wanted to do, and it had to be either you or some other cop." I saw Masters wince at the unwelcome appellation.

"I suppose you want my story before I cash in?" The two of us nodded, for there seemed not the slightest doubt that the man was passing quickly.

"My name's Shackleford—Shackleford of Tía Juana, Mexico. That was where I was born and raised. . . . . Oh, but I'll get on; you don't care about that part. You're interested in my arms and feet, and in Stanwood and Parker, eh?

"Well, I don't care much how you play it up now, 'cause I'm going, but those weren't murders. That was justice—slow and insufficient justice, too!

"There were three of us, Stanwood, Parker and myself—that was long before Stanwood was the respected gent that lived at Cheshire Hills. We were all 'fore the mast on the tramp steamer *Alexandria*—a South Sea bummer. At Honolulu we all deserted.

"We had gotten hold of a Kanaka who told us some yarns about the enormous pearls we could get up near one of the smaller islands—Kauai, it was. It sounded good to us; so the three of us took advantage of the disturbed state of affairs in Honolulu—one of the tin-pan kings was just then getting deposed—and stole a small boat from the harbor, and with our friend—Bhalanoku was his name—made for Kauai. Well, we got a few pearls, just diving for them ourselves, but they were enough to make us want more. We fitted up an expedition with the money we got from them, and went back.

"Thirty-two days we worked the second time, and I guess in that time we cleaned up the whole bed. Anyway, we weren't finding any more oysters. We were ready to go back—for more than one reason: We had found out in the meantime that Bhalanoku was losing his hair and his finger-nails! You know what that means in the tropics.

"A kind of terror hit the whole bunch of us, for when leprosy gets into a camp of Chinks and Kanakas, it aint long before all of 'em have it.

"Well, to cut it short, Stanwood and Parker beat it that night, with all the pearls, leaving me and Bhalanoku and all the others to rot there on Kauai! You see what it did to me!" Shackleford smiled grimly, and his eyes fell on his wrists.

"It was three months before I could get away from the island, and in that time I got it too. The crew we had brought with us were for killing Bhalanoku and myself, but I reasoned with them, showing them how we could make it share and share alike if we could find some more pearls. Well, we found a few more, and then we walked the shore-line until we came to Lamai, a little settlement on the west coast.

"There I left the rest of them and took a fishing schooner for Hawaii.

"I couldn't trace Stanwood and Parker, but I knew that they'd get to the States as quickly as they could; so I traded in some of my pearls for money for transportation, and came on myself."

HE smiled in ghastly fashion. "My one wish in the world since that time has been to find Stanwood and Parker. If I'd known how to go about it, I'd have given them the leprosy too, but I saw I couldn't do that; so I laid my plans differently. It's meant over twenty years of searching, but eight weeks ago I located them. You know the rest, I guess." His voice sank lower.

"But why did you go through all the nonsense about the huge feet?" asked Masters.

"Two reasons," came the terse answer. "Back at Kauai I used them to scare the natives with when they threatened insubordination. I knew I could scare the hick police with them. Then, I can walk better in them now," he added dryly. "You see, I don't own toes any more, and the long things keep me from stumbling. If I'd had sense enough to kill you when you were at that Stanwood place, I'd be free now. But why should I want to be free, anyway?" The voice sank lower with weakness.

"You pretty nearly did for us," vouchsafed Masters. "My friend here caught your bomb and threw it out the window just before—"

"I wish it had gone off!" snarled Shackleford with sudden venom; but then his voice trailed off in a weak cry. "There is a flask of whisky in my hip pocket—if it isn't broken. Would you—"

"Just a second!" interrupted Masters. "There are a few things I want to know first. What were Parker's relations with Stanwood, and how did you get past the dogs that night at Cheshire Hills?"

Shackleford sneered weakly. "Oh, Parker spent the gold he got for his share, while Stanwood made himself rich by good investments. I guess Parker bled him, though. The dogs? Even the young lions Stanwood kept on his place couldn't stomach me. They met me at the gate, and I thought I'd have to poison them, but they only smelled at me and backed away. They had sense. Now please, may I have the whisky?"

"How did Stanwood know you were coming?" continued Masters with apparent callousness.

"I wrote him!" gritted the prostrate victim through clenched teeth. "Please, wont you let me have the whisky?"

I waited to hear no more, for in spite of myself I pitied this horrible wreck, and wished to do as much as I could in easing his last moments. As I fished in his pocket, I thought Masters made a motion as if to stop me, but I pretended not to notice.

I uncorked the flask and held it to his lips. He drank the draught greedily; a shudder shook his mangled body, and he lay still.

"What the deuce!" I cried. "It killed him!"

Masters seized the flask. "I suspected something of the kind," he said, holding the flask gingerly to his nose, "but I couldn't see that it made much difference now. Cyanide in the whisky!"

"But if—if he were dying?" I protested. "Why should he commit suicide?"

Masters shrugged his shoulders. "There are many strong men," he remarked, "who would rather finish it than drag through unnecessary pain. It's just as well. He had played his string to a finish."

"The Specter at Macey's," another exciting exploit of Detective Masters, will be described in the forthcoming—the September—issue of THE GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE.

A Complete Résumé Of the Opening Installments

SIR ANTONY CONWAY was a gay young blade in the smiling London of pre-war days.

Among Tony's hobbies was the gentle art of pugilism, and that rising light of the fistic profession Tiger Bugg was one of his protégés. So it happened that on the night Tony first met the Lady from Long Acre, he was returning with Tiger from a bout at the Cosmopolitan Club. There the redoubtable Tiger had just made short work of one Lightning Lopez, who had been heavily backed by his fellow-countrymen the Marquis da Freitas, and Pedro, ex-King of Livadia. (According to Molly Monk, an old friend of Tony's, who was secretly married to Pedro, a revolution was likely in a short time to put him back on the throne.)

Tony and Tiger were walking toward a restaurant when they saw two well-dressed men address a girl ahead of them, who shrank back in fear.

Tony walked up to the girl.

"I beg your pardon," he said, "but it looked as if these gentlemen were annoying you. Can I be of any assistance?"

"Oh—if you would be so kind!" she replied.

Tony turned to the two strangers. "Go away," he said, "and hurry up about it."

But the strangers declined to be driven away, and a fight ensued. Presently a crowd gathered; and Tony, seeing that Tiger was amply able to finish off their opponents, took the girl's arm and slipped away with her. But when he undertook to see her home, she insisted that she had no home and was penniless. Puzzled, for Isabel—Isabel Francis, she said, was her name—evidenced breeding and refinement, Tony took her to a restaurant for supper; and then for want of a better asylum at that hour of the night, he escorted her to the house of his butler and left her under the care of the excellent Spalding's excellent wife.

Next day Tony breakfasted with Isabel; she still was reticent about herself; but she gave him a ring of enormous value with the request that he raise money on it for her needs. She consented for the present to stay under the chaperonage of Mrs. Spalding and the guardianship of Bugg. That night Bugg reported that somehow one of Isabel's dark-faced assailants had found out her refuge, for Bugg had seen the fellow in the neighborhood.

And presently Isabel's story came out: She was, it seemed, the daughter of Don Francisco, claimant to the throne of Livadia—who for twenty years, until the establishment of the republic, had striven to wrest the crown from Pedro's father.

After Don Francisco's death, Isabel had been intrusted by her guardian, her Uncle Philip, to the care of an English governess, Miss Watson. Later she had been under the chaperonage of a Frenchwoman. Recently Philip had schemed to marry Isabel to Pedro, unite the claimants to the Livadian throne and overthrow the republican government. Disliking Pedro, Isabel had fled from this forced marriage and had sought shelter with her old governess in Long Acre—only to find Miss Watson away. It was on that night that Tony had found her and rescued her from two pursuing emissaries of her uncle.

THE following day two Livadians forced their way into the house with the intention of carrying off Isabel, but Tony and Bugg fell upon them, and after a lively little scrap showed them the error of their ways. It developed that they were not agents of Pedro, but representatives of the old régime, the party of Don Francisco, Isabel's father, and that their aim was to overthrow the republic and restore the throne to Don Francisco's heir. Tony declined to permit Isabel to be mixed up in a revolution, however; and the two Livadians—Señor Congosta and Colonel Saltero—took their departure.

But a more determined attempt to kidnap Isabel was made shortly afterward by hirelings of the other party, when just as Tony and Isabel were alighting from his car at the Spaldings', Lightning Lopez and another of Pedro's men attacked them. Tony held them off until Bugg arrived, however—and Isabel neatly shot off one fellow's ear.

Tony felt that all this was a bit too much; and so he decided to move Isabel to the care of his aunt, Lady Jocelyn, until his yacht could be got ready for sea. Then they would all take a voyage to South America till Livadia calmed down.

WITH Isabel under Lady Jocelyn's wing, Tony breathed more freely—but not for long. A letter from a friend in business in Livadia informed him there was to be "a big dust-up" soon. Then Molly reported that Pedro had called to say good-by. Then Congosta came to Tony and told him that the revolution in Livadia had actually broken out—also that Da Freitas had chartered a yacht, the *Vivid*. And then came a report from his own yacht-captain that a stranger had boarded the *Betty* with the aid of false credentials and had attempted to damage the machinery. And then came the telegram:

"Isabel has disappeared fear the worst come back immediately. —Guy."

The Lady From Long Acre

By Victor Bridges

ILLUSTRATED BY RAY ROHN

"Oh, hang the theater!" said Molly. "I've a very good understudy, and they'll have to put up with her."

CHAPTER XVII

GUY must have heard the car turn in at the drive, for as they drew up in front of the house, he flung open the door and came to meet them. He looked white and haggard in the bright morning sunshine.

"You got my wire?" was his first remark.

Tony, who was at the wheel, nodded his head and climbed stiffly out of his seat. Hardened as he was to rapid driving, he felt something like a momentary reaction now that the return journey had been accomplished without disaster.

"Come into the house, Guy," he said. "You look like the 'before-taking' picture in a patent-medicine advertisement!"

They entered the hall, where Tony took off his coat and threw it across the back of one of the chairs.

"Now," he said, "tell me all about it."

"Da Freitas has got hold of Isabel," said Guy, making an effort to speak quietly. "She left Chester Square at nine o'clock this morning, and we have heard nothing of her since."

There was a brief pause.

"Go on," said Tony. "How did it happen?"

"It was my fault," answered Guy with a sort of harsh bitterness, "—at least, very largely it was. I spent practically all yesterday with Debenham trying to fix up about the Stanley estate. It was absolutely necessary to get the thing settled before we left England. Finally I went back to dinner at his house, and I didn't get home here till nearly one o'clock. Spalding had left your letter in my bedroom, but somehow or other—I was tired out and half asleep I suppose—I managed to overlook it. I had left instructions I wasn't to be waked up till nine o'clock this morning, and when Spalding came to call me, there was your letter on the dressing-table."

He paused.

"Directly I had read it, I went downstairs and rang up Chester Square. The housemaid answered the telephone and said that Isabel had just left the house, and that Aunt Fanny was still in bed. When I asked if Isabel had mentioned any reason for going out so early, she said that Spalding had rung up a quarter of an hour before and said that you wanted Miss Francis to come over

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here in a taxi as soon as possible. Well, of course I guessed there was something wrong at once. I sent for Spalding, and as I expected, he told me that he hadn't been near the telephone all the morning. I was getting really frightened now, so I told the girl to put me through to Aunt Fanny, who has another receiver in her bedroom. Then it all came out. Somebody, who pretended to be Spalding, had rung up at about twenty to nine and asked for Isabel. He had said you wanted her here, and that she was to take a taxi and come along as soon as she could manage it. Isabel evidently hadn't the faintest suspicion that it wasn't all right. Aunt Fanny was asleep at the time, and she wouldn't allow her to be waked up. She had just put on her hat and got into a taxi that was waiting a little way down the Square, and that's the very last that any of us have heard of her."

Guy's voice shook, but with an effort he managed to control it. "They've got her, Tony," he added despairingly. "I would have given my right hand to have stopped it—but what's the good now? They've got her, and we shall never see her again."

Tony laid his hand on his cousin's shoulder. "My dear old Guy," he said quietly, "it wasn't your fault. If anyone has been to blame, it's I." He took a couple of turns across the room and came back to where Guy was standing. "Hang it," he said ruefully. "I had no idea I was so fond of Isabel."

Guy looked up at him with a rather twisted smile. "I knew you would find it out eventually, Tony," he said. "It's a pity it's happened too late."

"Too late, be hanged!" observed Tony. "Even if Da Freitas has got hold of her, do you imagine I am going to let him keep her? I know now that I want Isabel more than anything else in the world. I have always been accustomed to have what I want, and it's a very bad thing to change one's habits suddenly at my age."

Guy made a kind of hopeless gesture with his hands. "But what can you do?" he demanded. "You have seen the papers this morning—you know what's happening in Livadia? The odds are they will take her straight over there and marry her to Pedro right away."

"Then I shall go over and fetch her back," replied Tony firmly. "I am not going to allow any silly old-fashioned ideas about the sanctity of marriage to interfere with my life's happiness."

GUY opened his mouth to speak, but he was suddenly interrupted by the grinding sound of a second motor pulling up abruptly outside the house. Almost at the same moment the bell rang with a prolonged violence that echoed up from the basement.

"I rather think that must be Congosta," said Tony.

He crossed the hall and pulling back the latch, opened the front door.

The visitor *was* Señor Congosta, but his most intimate friends might have been pardoned if for a moment they had failed to recognize him. Hatless, disheveled and with a long smear of blood at the corner of his mouth, he looked as if he had been taking part in a rather closely contested Irish election.

"So!" he observed, drawing himself up and glaring at Tony. "You have betrayed me."

Tony stepped toward him.

"Don't be silly," he said. "Come along in and sit down."

He thrust his arm through the Livadian's, and before the latter could protest, he had brought him to a chair and practically pushed him into it. "You had better have a drink right away," he added. "You look done to the world. Get the whisky, will you, Guy?"

Guy started off to do as he was asked, and before the disgruntled Señor had properly recovered himself, Tony turned back to him with a disarming smile.

"Sorry to have been so snappy," he said. "I suppose you have just found out about Isabel, and of course you would think we were scoundrels—naturally."

With an effort Congosta managed to regain his powers of speech.

"You know what has happened?" he demanded hoarsely. "You know where she is?"

"I have just heard that she was decoyed away from Chester Square by a false telephone-message at nine o'clock this morning. For the moment I have no idea where she is. If I had, I shouldn't be sitting here."

"Then you shall know!" Gripping the arm of the chair, Congosta bent forward toward him. "She is a drugged and helpless prisoner on the *Vivid*. By now she is halfway down the Thames on her way to Livadia."

There was a second's pause, and then Guy reappeared from the dining-room with the whisky and soda.

"Do you hear that, Guy?" said Tony. "Señor Congosta says that Isabel is on board the *Vivid* and that they have already started for Livadia."

Guy came up and put down the tray that he was carrying.

"I knew it," he said hopelessly. "We shall never see her again—never."

"And whose fault is that?" demanded Congosta, striking the arm of the chair with his fist. "Did you not promise me that she should be safe? Did I not leave the honor of my country in your hands?"

"You did," said Tony, "and we have let you down with a bump."

He splashed some whisky and soda into a glass and held it out to the Livadian, who sat there glowering at them both with angry suspicion.

"Come, Señor," Tony added persuasively, "drink that up and you'll feel better. Whatever else we do, it's no good quarreling among ourselves."

Congosta, who really did appear to be badly in need of it, gulped off a couple of mouthfuls of the stimulant, and set down the tumbler.

"Now listen to me," said Tony, speaking very slowly and quietly. "I admit that things look queer, and I admit that you have every right to feel suspicious. But there has been no treachery. You can get that idea out of your head right away. I moved Isabel to Chester Square because I thought it was the safest place she could be in. We took every precaution, and I haven't the faintest notion how Da Freitas found out her address. It has been just as big a smack in the eye to us as it is to you."

Either the drink or else Tony's unwonted earnestness evidently brought some sort of conviction to the visitor. Once again his shattered faith in the British aristocracy seemed slowly to revive, and rising to his feet, he bowed stiffly to his two companions.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I spoke hastily. I ask your pardon."

"If there is any apologizing to be done," said Tony, "it's up to me. I have underrated Da Freitas all through in the most fatuous way—and this is the result!"

Congosta reseated himself.

"Please tell me exactly what happened this morning," he said.

"Somebody rang up the house in Chester Square and pretended to be my butler," answered Tony. "He said that I wanted Isabel to come here at once in a taxi. Unfortunately the lady she is staying with was still asleep, and instead of waking her up and asking her advice, Isabel seems to have gone straight outside and got into a taxi that was waiting in the Square. That's the last we have heard of her."

Congosta nodded. "I can give you the rest of the story," he said. "For three days I have rented a little room close to an empty warehouse opposite to where the *Vivid* was lying. There is a wharf just below, where anyone would start from if he wished to reach the vessel. Always there is some one in that room—I or another—watching and waiting. Last night, late and in the dark, a cart came down with luggage and packages. They took them on board, and I knew then that Da Freitas' plans were ready. Very early this morning they began to get up steam on the yacht. I stayed there, watching from the window, and at ten o'clock a boat put off with four men in it. They were all Livadians—one I knew well by sight. I had seen him at Richmond with Da Freitas. When they got to the wharf, they came ashore and fastened up the boat. They were evidently expecting some one, because two of them took it in turns to watch, while the others went across the roadway to drink."

Congosta paused, and taking out his handkerchief pressed it against his lip.

"Just before midday," he went on,

"a big closed car came quickly along the lane and pulled up at the wharf. There was no one about at the moment except the four sailors. I saw Pedro open the door and get out, and then almost before I could realize what was happening, there was my royal mistress—drugged, helpless, hardly able to stand—with the Count on one side of her and Da Freitas on the other."

He stopped again and took in a long breath.

"I think for a little while I was mad. It would have been better, far better, if I had not shown myself. Then I could have got away quickly, and something might still have been arranged. But for the moment I was so full of rage and disappointment that I did not know what I was doing. I only remember running downstairs — my mind made up that I would kill Da Freitas. Then I was among them, and had it been anyone else, my knife would have been in his heart before they could have stopped me. But I think that black smiling devil cannot be surprised. Even as I flung myself at him, he dragged the Princess in front of him, and I could not strike for the fear that I might hurt her. Then in a moment I was beaten to the ground. I fought bravely, splendidly, but what could I do against six men? I must have been stunned by a blow on the head from behind, for I remember nothing more until I came to my senses again in the small wineshop across the street. Some one had found

"She got into a taxi that was waiting, and that's the last that any of us have heard of her. . . . . They've got her, Tony," Guy added despairingly. "I would have given my right hand to have stopped it—but what's the good now?"

me lying on the wharf, and they had carried me in there thinking that I was dead."

ONCE more he stopped, and reaching out a rather shaky hand for the tumbler, finished off the whisky and soda.

"Are you badly hurt?" asked Guy, who had been listening to the narrative with a mixture of amazement and concern.

Congosta put his hand to his forehead. "It is nothing serious. Only my head aches very much. I think they would have killed me if it had not been for my hat."

"Let's have a look," said Tony. "I know a little about cracked skulls."

He came round to where Congosta was sitting, and bending over the latter's chair, very carefully parted the hair at a place where it was matted with congealed blood.

"It's a nasty bump," he said sympathetically, "but I don't think there is any real damage done. You must have a very good hatter."

"Shall I fetch some hot water and bathe it for you?" suggested Guy, getting up from his seat.

Congosta raised his hand protestingly. "It will wait," he said with a certain grimness. "What we are speaking of will not."

Tony seated himself on the arm of the opposite chair. "Go on," he said. "What happened when you came round?"

"For a little while," continued Congosta, "I could remember nothing. Then suddenly it all came back to me, and somehow the shock seemed to make me strong again. The people in the wine-shop wished to send for the police, but I would not let them. Instead I paid them to get me a taxi. I had made up my mind that first I would come to you, and that I would find out the truth. I could see from the window that the yacht had already moved from her moorings, and I knew that it was now too late for anything except to warn my friends in Livadia. That—and to be revenged upon you, if you had betrayed me."

There was a pause.

"It's horrible to be so helpless," said Guy with a sort of groan. "Is there nothing that we can do? I suppose there would be no chance of getting them held up for an hour or two at Southend."

"What for?" asked Tony languidly.

"There's—there's this assault upon Señor Congosta."

The latter shook his head. "It would be useless," he said. "I know well that your government will be only too pleased that they have gone. The police would not be allowed to interfere even if they wished to."

"But we must do something!" exclaimed Guy almost fiercely.

Tony got up from his seat. "I know what I'm going to do," he said. "I am going to follow them to Livadia."

For an instant both of them stared at him without speaking.

"But how do you expect to get there?" demanded Congosta incredulously. "The steamers from England are stopped, and all the frontier is in the hands of Da Freitas' soldiers. No one will be allowed to enter the country until the revolution is over."

"That doesn't matter to me," said Tony. "I have a private yacht of my own."

The news seemed to produce a remarkable effect upon Congosta.

"A private yacht!" he repeated, rising abruptly to his feet. "And you mean what you say? You mean that you will sail for Portriga—now—immediately—at once?"

"Well, say to-morrow morning," suggested Tony. "That will give us time to get on board first."

By now all Congosta's headache and exhaustion seemed magically to have vanished.

"My friend," he ejaculated fervently, "my dear Sir Antony! You may yet be of the truest service to my unhappy country."

"But look here!" broke in Guy, who had also risen from his chair and was gazing from one to the other of them. "This is all very well, but what on earth's the use of it? Even if we got to Portriga, you don't suppose we should have the faintest chance of being able to do anything!"

"I don't like looking too far ahead," said Tony. "It shows a lack of trust in Providence."

Congosta wheeled round excitedly to Guy. "Señor," he exclaimed, "I assure you that you may yet save Livadia!" He turned back to Tony. "You have seen this morning's paper? You know the truth about what has happened?"

"I have seen *The Daily Mail,*" said Tony guardedly.

"So! That is right, what they have written, but there is later news." He thrust his hand into his breast pocket, and dragging out some papers, selected a crumpled cable-form which he opened with shaking fingers. "Even now General Almaida is in Portriga. He holds the whole town south of the river."

"Do you mean that you're in communication with them?" demanded Guy. "I thought all the wires had been cut."

"We were not without our preparations," returned Congosta with a vindictive smile. "The way is still open. It will not be closed so long as General Almaida is undefeated."

"And how long is that likely to be?" asked Tony.

Congosta drew himself up.

"Señor," he replied dramatically, "it rests with you."

THERE was a short pause.

"Well," said Tony encouragingly.

"There are two things in which our brave army is lacking—ammunition and money. If we can help them with these—"

Tony nodded. "What's the idea—exactly?" he asked.

Congosta took a step forward, his dark eyes gleaming with excitement. He began to speak in a low, rapid voice.

"A week ago, by the instructions of General Almaida, I gave an order to one of your English houses for a supply of cartridges. The money was to have been sent to me, and we had arranged a plan for getting them safely across. Had the revolution not broken out, they would now be on their way. As it is,"—he made a quick, expressive gesture with his hands,—"the money has not come, and even if I could pay, there is no vessel that could take them to Livadia."

He paused for breath.

"We haven't a cargo-license for the *Betty,*" said Tony, "but I don't know that it really matters."

Congosta came nearer still. "You will do it?" he gasped. "You will lend us this money? You will take the cartridges on your yacht?"

Tony nodded again. "Why, of course," he said. "It's the least I can do after losing Isabel in that careless fashion."

With an exclamation of joy Congosta seized his hand, and commenced wringing it violently up and down.

"My friend!" he exclaimed with tears in his eyes. "How can I ever thank you?"

"But good heavens!" interrupted Guy, drawing in his breath. "Do you realize what this means? It's—it's—filibustering—piracy—buccaneering!"

"Is it!" said Tony. "What fun! I have always wanted to be a buccaneer, ever since I was thirteen." He disentangled himself with some difficulty from the clutches of Congosta. "Don't worry, Guy," he added; "you needn't be mixed up with it in any way."

"What!" For a moment Guy's indignation rendered him almost speechless. "Do you suppose I am thinking of myself? Do you imagine I shall desert you—now—at this time?"

"There is not the danger that the Señor fancies," broke in Congosta with a kind of feverish eagerness. "Listen! I will explain!" He turned again to Tony. "You have heard of Braxa?"

"I don't think so," said Tony regretfully. "You see I was educated at Eton."

"It is a fishing village—a small fishing village and harbor twenty miles south of Portriga. The people there are different from most of my countrymen. They are all fishermen, and they do not concern themselves much with politics."

"It sounds just the sort of quiet, sensible place one would like to visit," observed Tony.

"So! You understand what I mean!" Congosta's excitement became almost painful to witness. "You are on a voyage of pleasure! You come into the harbor in your yacht. My people will be expecting you. In an hour the cartridges will be on shore; and then"—he paused, and the same vindictive smile gathered in his eyes—"there may yet be a little hitch in the clever plans of the Marquis da Freitas."

"It's a great idea," said Tony admiringly. "So simple and safe! Why, we needn't even land if we don't want to."

"But what would be the good—" began Guy.

HE got no further, for he suddenly caught sight of his cousin's face, as the latter looked around at him, and its expression dried up the question that he was about to utter.

"These cartridges," inquired Tony, turning back to Congosta with his previously serene air, "—how long do you think it would take to get them to Southampton?"

"There need be no delay," replied the Livadian. "It is only a question of the money. As soon as they are paid for, I can arrange for them to be sent down on a motor-lorrie. They would go tonight."

Tony nodded approvingly. "And how about your message to Livadia? It wont be an easy thing to explain. None of your people have ever heard of me except Colonel Saltero, and I don't think I impressed him very favorably."

Congosta dismissed the objection with a wave of his hand.

"You may leave that to me," he said. "I assure you that before he left England, Colonel Saltero was convinced of your good faith. I shall arrange that it is he who will meet you at Braxa to receive the cartridges."

"But wont you be coming with us?" asked Guy.

Congosta shook his head. "I must stay in London," he answered regretfully. "It is General Almaida's wish. Should our party win, it is necessary that there should be some one here to obtain recognition from your government."

"Quite so," said Tony, "quite so." He lighted a cigarette and took a couple of thoughtful paces up and down the hall. Guy did not speak again, but watched him with a strained apprehension that showed itself visibly in his face.

"Tell me," said Tony, coming back to where Congosta was standing, "could you get a message through to anyone in Portriga?"

Congosta looked faintly surprised. "I cannot say. It is possible. It would depend perhaps upon what part of the town they were in." He paused. "Why do you wish to know?"

"I am a little bit anxious about a friend of mine," said Tony frankly. "He has been running a motor-company in Portriga for the last two years, and from what he has told me, I am afraid that he has made one or two rather awkward enemies—business enemies, you know. They are not the sort of crowd to miss a chance like this, and just in case he was in difficulties, I should like him to know that the *Betty* was coming to Braxa. Then if he wanted to slip out of the country quietly, he could."

Congosta accepted the explanation in what appeared to be perfectly good faith.

"I understand," he said. "You shall give me your friend's name and address, and then if our people can reach him, you may be sure that he will get your message."

Tony walked across to the writing-table and seated himself in the chair.

"That's good," he said cheerfully. "One doesn't like to leave a pal in the lurch—especially in Livadia."

He took a sheet of paper from the case in front of him and in his best handwriting copied out the following address.

Señor James Dale
Garage Anglais
Praga D. Perto
Portriga

"I think it would be simplest," he said, "if you just told him that the *Betty* was expected at Braxa in two days' time. He would probably like to see me even if there's nothing the matter."

"Was your parting shot serious, Molly?" Tony asked.

"It was," she said, "—dead, absolute serious. If you want Peter's letter, you'll have to take me with you to Livadia. Say yes, Tony," she added almost fiercely.

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Congosta took the paper and glanced at its contents.

"If the thing is possible, it shall be done," he repeated.

TONY put his hand in his pocket and pulled out his check-book.

"And now let's get to work," he observed. "I shall be pretty busy if we are going to sail to-morrow morning, so I think I had better leave the cartridge business entirely to you. I will give you an open check on my bank, and you can cash it on your way back."

Congosta nodded his approval. "That will be the easiest plan," he said. "Then I can also make the arrangements for sending them off."

" 'Steam yacht *Betty,* Southampton,' will be enough address," continued Tony, writing the check as he spoke. "I will wire my captain instructions to be on the lookout for them." He blotted the slip and handed it to Congosta. "I don't know what they will come to," he added; "I have made the check out for four thousand."

Congosta gazed with surprised awe at the little piece of pink paper in his hand.

"Four thousand pounds!" he repeated slowly. "But it will not be so much as that!"

"Never mind," said Tony, getting up from his chair. "Ask for the rest in gold and bring it back here. We can take it along with us. If your people are as hard up as you say, I dare say a few English sovereigns will come in useful. They are a wonderfully effective weapon with royalists, as a rule."

Congosta folded up the check reverently, and put it away in his pocket. Then he picked up his hat.

"Señor!" he exclaimed with a tremble of emotion in his voice. "Again I offer you the thanks of my country. It is only in England that such splendid generosity is possible."

"There's nothing to thank me for," said Tony cheerfully. It's my own stupidity and carelessness I'm paying for—that's all." He accompanied Congosta across the hall and opened the front door for him. "We shall expect you back here sometime this afternoon," he added.

The Livadian nodded.

"I shall return as soon as I have arranged about the cartridges," he said. "It is best that I should not send the message until we know for certain what time you will be able to start."

Once more he clasped Tony's hand and shook it fervently, and then, after giving some instructions to the driver, he stepped into the waiting taxi and was whirled off down the drive.

Tony came back into the hall and closed the door. As he did so, he caught sight of a note lying at the bottom of the letter-box, and taking it out, discovered that it was addressed to himself.

"And now," broke out Guy, who had apparently been restraining himself with difficulty, "perhaps you'll tell me if you are really in earnest."

Tony slit open the envelope and pulled out its contents.

"Of course I'm in earnest," he answered. "I was never so—" He paused abruptly, and his lips screwed themselves up into a sudden low whistle of amused amazement. "By Jove, Guy," he exclaimed, "look at this!"

He held out the sheet of note-paper, and then thrusting his hands into his pockets, watched his cousin's face as the latter read through the following missive.

My dear Sir Antony Conway:
I much regret that I was unable to find time to say good-by to you before leaving England. You have a proverb I believe in your delightful language to the effect that he laughs loudest who laughs last. You will now be able to appreciate its profound truth.
Always yours sincerely,
DA FREITAS.

CHAPTER XVIII

GUY read it through and then looked up with a sort of incredulous bewilderment.

"When did this come?" he asked.

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "My dear Guy, I don't know any more about it than you do. I suppose some one must have put it in the letter-box while we were having our pleasant little chat with Congosta."

"But—but—" He stared at it again in frowning uncertainty. "Good heavens, Tony," he exclaimed, "do you mean to say that Da Freitas took the trouble and ran the risk of sending you this while he was actually—" He broke off as if unable to complete the sentence.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" said Tony cheerfully. "My respect for the Marquis increases every hour—in fact, I'm beginning to feel quite fond of him."

Guy's lips tightened into an expression of restrained exasperation.

"Look here, Tony," he began with forced calmness. "For goodness sake, let's get this thing quite clear. Did you really mean what you said to Congosta?"

Tony took back Da Freitas' note and put it carefully in his pocket.

"I meant most of it," he replied. "I am going down to Southampton to-night, and I shall start for Livadia the moment the *Betty* is ready to sail."

Guy knew him well enough to understand that for once he was speaking in absolute sincerity.

"You mean to fight, then? You are going to join this man—what's his name?—General Almaida?"

There was a short pause.

"Somehow or other," said Tony, "I am going to get Isabel back. It's no good asking me exactly how I shall do it, because at the present moment I don't know. The only thing I have quite made up my mind about is that I shall either come back with her, or else I sha'n't come back at all." He looked up smilingly at Guy. "Now you understand what I meant when I said I didn't want to drag you into it."

A faint flush mounted into Guy's naturally pale face.

"Do you think I'm a coward, Tony?" he inquired very deliberately.

"Of course not," returned Tony. "Any man who has a cold bath as you do every morning must be brave. Still, that's no reason why you should run a quite unnecessary risk of getting shot—especially as you have disapproved of the whole business ever since the start."

"Who could help disapproving of it?" burst out Guy feelingly. "It's the maddest and most impossible affair in which any sane person was ever mixed up." He paused as if to recover himself. "All the same," he added quietly, "I should like to come with you, Tony, if you think I could be of any use."

Tony patted him approvingly on the shoulder. "Any use!" he repeated. "Why, my dear old Guy, I would rather have you with me than the Seven Champions of Christendom. I am sure you would be a lot more reliable in a really tight corner."

"Have you got any sort of a plan at all?" inquired Guy a little hopelessly.

"Well, I've an idea," said Tony. "It's hardly a plan yet, but it may be by the time I get back."

"You're going out?"

Tony nodded. "I sha'n't be long, and meanwhile you can fix up the arrangements here. In the first place I want you to get Simmons on the telephone. You had better ring up the Grand Hotel, Southampton, and say you're me, and ask them very prettily and nicely if they'll send round some one to fetch him from the yacht. Tell him that we are coming down to-night or early to-morrow morning—you and I and Bugg—and that he must be ready to start directly we arrive. Say that we have changed our minds about South America and that we are going to Braxa instead."

Guy stepped to the table and made a note of these instructions.

"Anything else?" he inquired.

"Nothing more," replied Tony. "Just see that Spalding packs our things, and that Jennings has the car ready—the Rolls, of course. Any spare time you have after that I should devote to making your will."

He picked up his coat off the chair on which it was lying.

"Where are you going to?" asked Guy.

There was a short pause while Tony lighted a cigarette.

"I am going to a matinée," he said, "at the Gaiety Theater."

For a moment Guy stared at him in amazement.

"A matinée!" he repeated. "What

on—" Then suddenly light seemed to dawn on him. "Why, of course, that girl—Molly Monk—I had forgotten her." He paused. "Do you think she can be of any help?"

Tony walked to the door. "She might lend us a sheet of note-paper," he said. "Anyhow I mean to ask her."

IF there is one profession in this world more likely than the rest to induce a certain slight cynicism with regard to human motives, it is probably that of being stage-door keeper at the Gaiety Theater. When therefore a quarter of an hour later Tony presented his card at the open pigeonhole with a request that he might see Miss Monk immediately on a matter of urgent importance, the uniformed gentleman inside contented himself with a weary smile.

"I'll send it up, sir," he remarked, "but between ourselves it aint no good. The gov'nor don't allow visitors in the dressin'-room—not while the show's on."

Tony, who had been fingering a sovereign, laid it down beside the card.

"What a pity!" he replied thoughtfully.

At sight of the gold-piece the janitor's world-hardened face lighted up with an expression almost beautiful.

"I'll take it up meself, sir," he observed, hastily climbing down from his stool. "Of course, if it's a matter o' urgent importance—" He emerged from his rabbit-hutch, card in hand, and pushing open a swing door, disappeared from view up a winding flight of stairs.

After a decent interval he returned with the air of one who had triumphed over great odds.

" 'S orl right," he remarked in a confidential whisper. "She's orf now, sir. You foller me, sir."

He conducted Tony up the stairs, to the first landing, where he tapped cautiously on the second door he came to. It was opened at once by a secretive-looking lady who appeared to be lunching on pins, and at the same moment Molly's voice remarked with its usual pleasant distinctness: "If that's you, Tony, come along in."

Complying with the request, Tony found himself in a small, brightly lighted apartment, the principal furniture of which appeared to be a vast mirror, a long narrow dressing-table, a comfortable easy-chair, and an inspiriting collection of foamy undergarments suspended from a row of pegs.

In the chair sat Molly. She was dressed in the simple and practical costume of a milkmaid, as visualized by producers of musical comedy. It consisted of a charmingly décolleté creation of white muslin and blue ribbon, completed by a large "baby" hat, a skirt that just reached her knees, white silk stockings and high-heeled shoes.

"Oh, Tony!" she exclaimed. "Thank goodness you've come!" Then turning to the dresser, she added kindly: "You can shove off, Jane; I want to talk to him alone."

ACTING on the hint, the lady of the pins withdrew from the room, and hardly waiting until the door had closed behind her, Molly jumped up.

"Have you anything to tell me, Tony?" she asked in a voice that shook a little with excitement. "I know nothing yet except what I've seen in the paper. I have tried to ring you up twice, but—"

"How long have you got now?" inquired Tony.

She glanced at the little silver clock on the dressing-table.

"About ten minutes. Then I have to go on and sing a song, and after that there's the interval."

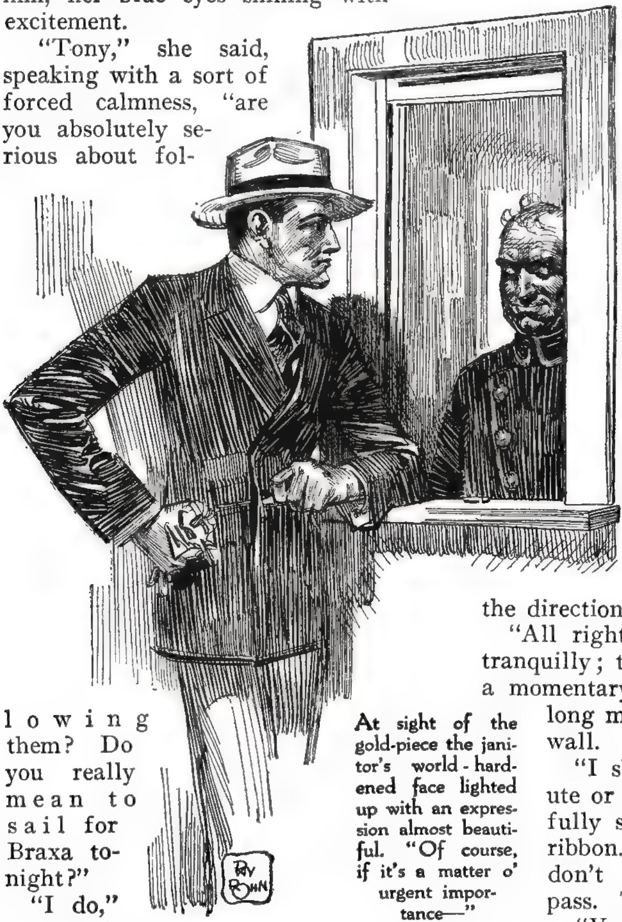
"I can tell you everything I know in ten minutes," said Tony, "if there are no interruptions."

Molly moved quickly to the door and turned the key in the lock.

"Fire ahead," she observed.

A week earlier Tony would have found it quite impossible to crowd the somewhat eventful history of the last twenty-four hours into the short time at his disposal. Practice, however, had been improving his powers as a story-teller, and without omitting any really important detail, he actually accomplished the feat with something like a minute and a half to spare.

Molly was certainly an excellent audience. Standing motionless at the door, her lower lip caught tight between her teeth, she listened to him with a rapt attention that never wavered or varied. Even when he had finished, she still remained silent for a moment: then with a sudden movement she came toward him, her blue eyes shining with excitement.



At sight of the gold-piece the janitor's world-hardened face lighted up with an expression almost beautiful. "Of course, if it's a matter o' urgent importance—"

"Tony," she said, speaking with a sort of forced calmness, "are you absolutely serious about following them? Do you really mean to sail for Braxa to-night?"

"I do," replied Tony with a quite unusual sobriety. "You see, I have just found out that I am really fond of Isabel, and I don't see any other possible chance of getting her back."

"Do you think this is a possible chance?" She put the question with an earnestness that robbed it of any suggestion of sarcasm.

"Well, it's a bit thin," admitted Tony frankly, "but after all, one never knows." He paused. "To a certain extent, Molly," he added, "our success depends upon you."

She drew in her breath sharply. "Me?"

Tony nodded. "You're my trump card," he said encouragingly. "You know that signed pass our friend Peter was obliging enough to give you—the one which he said would enable you to go anywhere if he ever got back to Livadia as king?"

"Yes," said Molly.

"Well, if you're not using it for the moment," continued Tony, "I'd be awfully obliged if you'd lend it to me. If it will really do half of what he said it would, it might come in devilish handy."

There was a moment's pause, and then a clatter of footsteps came hurrying down the passage outside, and some one rapped loudly on the door.

"Miss Monk, please," shouted a shrill and penetrating voice.

Molly looked round in the direction of the summons.

"All right, Charles," she called out tranquilly; then turning back, she took a momentary glance at herself in the long mirror that hung against the wall.

"I shall be up again in a minute or two, Tony," she said, skillfully smoothing out a disordered ribbon. "Have a cigarette, and don't worry yourself about the pass. That will be quite all right."

"You'll lend it to me?" exclaimed Tony gratefully.

Molly paused on the threshold and looked at him with a sort of mischievous elation.

"No," she said, "I wont lend it you; but I'll bring it with me."

And with this somewhat staggering announcement she opened the door and disappeared from view.

WHATEVER effect her remark may have had upon Tony, he appeared to have recovered from it fairly successfully by the time she returned. At all events she found him reclining in the easy-chair, enveloped in cigarette-smoke and looking precisely as comfortable and unruffled as when she had left him.

"Was your parting shot serious, Molly?" Tony asked in that pleasantly serene voice of his.

As he spoke, he got up from the chair; and Molly, who was a little out of breath, dropped into the vacant seat.

"It was," she said, "—dead, absolute serious. If you want Peter's letter, you'll have to take me with you to Livadia." She paused and looked up at him. "Say yes, Tony," she added almost fiercely. "Don't you see that I mean it?"

Tony, who was gazing down at her with a sort of dispassionate admiration, nodded his head.

"I see you mean it all right, Molly," he said quietly; "but it's a bit of a bombshell, you know. This wont be exactly a healthy trip if we happen to mess things up."

Molly leaned across to the dressing-table and helped herself to a cigarette.

"Tony dear," she observed, "I know I'm a musical-comedy actress, but it doesn't necessarily follow that I'm a complete idiot. I understand perfectly that we're taking on about as risky and hopeless a job as anyone could possibly tackle. If Da Freitas finds out, I should think the odds are about twenty to one that neither of us will ever come back." She struck a match and lighted her cigarette. "Now are you satisfied?" she inquired.

"Well, you seem to have a fairly sound grip of the situation," admitted Tony. "Still, that doesn't make it any the less of a large order." He paused. "Good Lord, Molly—why, it's madness, stark staring madness!"

"I don't see it," returned Molly obstinately. "A wife's place is by her husband's side—especially when he has run away with another woman."

In spite of himself Tony laughed. "But supposing we reach Livadia, suppose we actually get into Portriga—what can you do even then?"

"What's the good of asking me that?" demanded Molly. "I don't know any more than you do—not till the time comes. The only thing is—" She broke off, as though not quite sure how to continue.

"Well?" said Tony encouragingly.

"It's just an idea—nothing else at present; but—but you have told me several times that this girl and I are almost exactly alike."

Tony nodded. He was staring at her with a sudden expression of freshly aroused interest.

"Well, don't you see?" Molly threw away her cigarette and rose to her feet. "Surely it's just possible that somehow —by some sort of a chance—we might be able to make use of this to help us." She laughed almost hysterically. "Oh, I know it sounds wild and mad, but what notion have you got that's any better?"

Tony took a couple of paces to the door, and back to where she was standing.

"By Jove, it's an idea, Molly!" he said slowly. "If we could get you there without being found out—"

"I have thought of that," she interrupted. "I was thinking of it all the time I was on the stage." She paused. "Tony, you remember that song I was singing a couple of years ago—the one in which I used to dress up as a curate?"

He nodded.

"Well, I've still got the things I wore —the clothes and the wig and the spectacles—in fact, the whole get-up. It was so good that once, just for a joke, I went out into the street in it. I walked the whole way down the Strand, and not a soul spotted that there was anything wrong."

The old gleam of mischievous amusement leaped into Tony's eyes.

"Good Lord, Molly!" he said. "And you propose to take the trip—in those?"

"Why not?" she demanded. I can carry it through all right—really and truly I can. After all, there's no reason you shouldn't have a curate on board, is there?"

"None at all," said Tony. "Oh, none at all." He leaned against the wall and began to laugh, gently and joyously.

Molly faced him with shining eyes. "Then you'll take me?" she demanded.

Again Tony nodded his head. "I'll take you, Molly," he answered; "if it's only for the sake of seeing Guy's face."

There was another clatter and shuffle of footsteps outside, and the voice of the call-boy came echoing down the passage.

"Beginners, Act Two, please!"

TONY stopped laughing. "How about your work? How about your part here at the theater?" he asked.

"Oh, hang the theater!" said Molly simply. "I've got a very good understudy, and they'll have to put up with her." She glanced again rapidly at the clock. "Listen, Tony—we've got exactly two minutes, and then I must start changing. I shall have to have the dresser in, and we can't talk in front of her. Tell me now—right away—just what you want me to do."

For a moment Tony reflected rapidly.

"I think the best plan will be for you to motor down with me," he said. "I can send Guy and Bugg in one car with Jennings, and call for you at your place with the other. I sha'n't tell Guy anything about it until you're safe on board."

"Why?" asked Molly. "Do you think he'll mind?"

"I am sure he will," said Tony cheerfully. "But it will be too late for him to do anything then unless he tries to throw you into the sea." He paused. "Can you be ready by nine-thirty sharp?"

Molly nodded. "I wont keep you waiting," she said.

There was a knock at the door, and having been granted permission to enter, the secretive-looking dresser reappeared on the scene.

"Beg pardon for hinterrupting, Miss," she observed apologetically, "but it's time you was startin' to change."

"Quite right, Jane," said Molly. She turned to Tony and held out her hand. "Well, thanks for coming and looking me up, Tony," she added. "See you again quite soon, I hope."

Tony raised her hand and kissed the tip of her fingers. "Why, yes," he said, "we'll probably run across each other before long."

JUST twenty minutes later Lady Jocelyn's pretty parlormaid opened the door of the drawing-room at Chester Square, and in a slightly agitated voice for such a well-trained retainer, announced the arrival of Sir Antony Conway.

Tony, who had followed hard upon her heels, came straight up to the sofa, where, as usual, his aunt was sitting. She looked older and very frail, and her thin hands trembled a little as she stretched them out to greet him.

"Tony," she exclaimed, "my dear boy!"

He sat down beside her, holding her hands in his. "Aunt Fanny," he said severely, "you have been breaking the rules. You know that you're never allowed to look unhappy or worried."

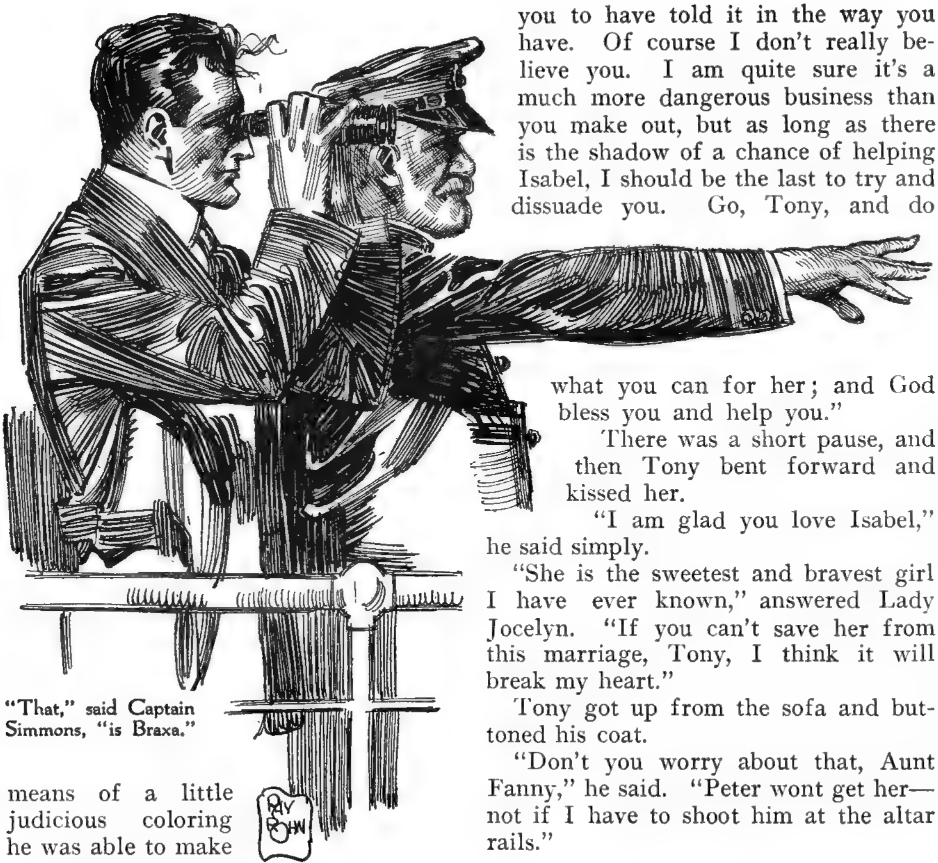
"It wasn't altogether my fault it happened, Tony," she said. "I would have given my stupid useless old life twice over to have stopped it."

In a tender, half-jesting fashion he slipped his arm round her. "You mustn't talk like that, Aunt Fanny dear," he said. "In fact, you mustn't talk at all. You must just sit still and listen to me. There is no time for anything else."

Lady Jocelyn clasped her hands in her lap. "Go on," she said quietly.

All the way from the Gaiety to the house, Tony had been pondering in his mind just how much of the truth it would be advisable to tell. Knowing his aunt, he was not afraid that she would try to dissuade him from his purpose, however dangerous it might appear; he was merely anxious to present it in as favorable a light as possible, so as to spare her any avoidable anxiety.

With this idea he omitted all reference to the attempt upon the *Betty*, confining himself entirely to a description of Congosta's visit. He repeated the latter's story of what had happened to Isabel, and then went on to relate how the plan for a possible rescue had been promptly and happily conceived. By



"That," said Captain Simmons, "is Braxa."

means of a little judicious coloring he was able to make it appear a far more feasible proposition than when it had originally presented itself in the hall of Goodmansrest.

Of his subsequent visit to the Gaiety he said nothing at all. Molly's presence on board the *Betty,* in the guise of a curate, might or might not be of assistance, but from the point of view of inspiring confidence in the enterprise, it seemed to be one of those features which were better suppressed.

Lady Jocelyn listened to him without interruption. Her face betrayed nothing of what she was feeling, and for a moment after he had finished speaking, Tony was under the impression that his well-meant efforts had been entirely successful. Then with her faint kindly smile she laid her hand upon his sleeve.

"Thank you, Tony dear," she said. "It was good of you to come and tell me all this, and it was nicer still of you to have told it in the way you have. Of course I don't really believe you. I am quite sure it's a much more dangerous business than you make out, but as long as there is the shadow of a chance of helping Isabel, I should be the last to try and dissuade you. Go, Tony, and do what you can for her; and God bless you and help you."

There was a short pause, and then Tony bent forward and kissed her.

"I am glad you love Isabel," he said simply.

"She is the sweetest and bravest girl I have ever known," answered Lady Jocelyn. "If you can't save her from this marriage, Tony, I think it will break my heart."

Tony got up from the sofa and buttoned his coat.

"Don't you worry about that, Aunt Fanny," he said. "Peter wont get her—not if I have to shoot him at the altar rails."

CHAPTER XIX

"THAT," said Captain Simmons, "is Braxa."

He pointed out ahead to where the desolate-looking sandy coast that they had been skirting for some hours rose suddenly into an irregular line of hills and cliffs.

"If you have a look through these," he added, "you'll be able to see the entrance to the bay."

Tony, who was standing beside him on the bridge, lightly clad in blue silk pajamas and a Norfolk jacket, took the proffered glasses and leveled them in the direction indicated. In the bright early-morning sunshine he could plainly make out the small opening in the coastline, behind which a number of pink and white houses could be seen straggling picturesquely up the hillside.

"It looks a very nice place," he said

generously. "How long do you think it will take us to get there?"

Captain Simmons glanced at his watch. "We shall make the point in about three quarters of an hour," he said. "We ought to be at anchor by half-past nine."

"In that case," said Tony, "I shall go and have some breakfast. I shall be much too excited to eat eggs and bacon when we're once in the harbor."

He left the bridge and went leisurely down the main companion to his cabin.

A quarter of an hour later he emerged again, looking very cool and comfortable in a well-cut suit of gray flannels. Nothing would ever induce him to adopt a more conventional form of yachting costume—his own explanation being that white duck and blue serge invariably made him seasick.

As he passed along the passage on his way to the saloon, a cabin door swung open and some one stepped out almost into his arms. It was Molly, but anyone who could have recognized the fact without being told so must have possessed an extraordinary acuteness of perception.

AS far as outward appearance went, she was as sound and convincing a curate as the most fastidious vicar could possibly demand. Even the cleverest actresses, when they dress up as men, nearly always betray the fact in a dozen ways, but except for a certain delicacy of feature, there was absolutely nothing about her to arouse the faintest suspicion. With her gold-rimmed spectacles and her smoothly brushed and amazingly natural wig, she looked a perfect specimen of that rather fragile type of young clergyman who is apt to stir a tender and half-maternal passion in the hearts of middle-aged spinsters.

Tony, who had had forty-eight hours in which to become accustomed to this masterpiece, stopped and gazed at her in fresh and profound admiration.

"It's marvelous, Molly," he observed, "absolutely marvelous! Every time I look at you I feel exactly as if I was going to say grace."

She laughed, and in a rather unclerical fashion slid her arm through his. "Well, come along and do it then," she said. "I'm quite ready for breakfast."

They made their way to the saloon, where they found Guy already established, and the steward in the very act of bringing in the coffee. Guy's face was a little pale—the result of a slight attack of seasickness on the previous day, but it wore the same look of combined determination and disapproval which had been stamped firmly on it ever since he had found out that Molly was to accompany them on the trip.

"Do you know," said Tony, as they seated themselves at the table, "that in an hour's time we shall be at anchor in Braxa Harbor?"

There was an exclamation from both his companions.

"I didn't realize we were as near as that," said Guy.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" demanded Molly. "I should have gone up on deck to have a look."

"I thought you had better have your breakfast first," said Tony. "It's very bad for one to get excited on an empty tummy." He helped himself handsomely to eggs and bacon. "Besides, we must be very careful how we show ourselves at present. The skipper says there's a coast-guard station at the entrance to the bay, and if it's still in working order, they probably have us under observation already."

"Do you think they'll want to come and search us when we reach harbor?" asked Guy a little apprehensively.

Tony shrugged his shoulders. "That's what they're there for," he said; "but when there's a revolution and two or three civil wars buzzing about, people are apt to get a little careless in their work. Anyhow, I'm not worrying myself about that. Our dear old friend Colonel Saltero is expecting us, and you can be quite sure he doesn't mean tc have his cartridges mopped up by anyone else." He paused to refill his cup. "What I'm thinking about is Jimmy," he added. "It will make all the difference in the world if Jimmy can only manage to get on board before the Colonel does. We shall have some sort of a notion where we are, then."

"I shouldn't think there was much chance of it," observed Molly.

"You never know," said Tony hopefully. "There's a lot of resource about Jimmy. A money-lender once spent six weeks trying to serve a writ on him, and he couldn't do it even then."

THERE was a knock at the cabin door, and in answer to Tony's "Come in!" one of the crew presented himself on the threshold.

"If you please, Sir Ant'ny," he began, "the Captain's compliments, and there's a party o' the name o' Dale signalin' to us from a small cutter to starboard. Says 'e's a friend o' yours, sir. The Capt'n wants to know if we shall stop and pick him up."

There was a dramatic pause, and then Tony wheeled round in his chair so as to face the speaker.

"Pick him up!" he repeated. "Why, I should think so, Jackson. Pick him up tenderly—touch him with care. Tell Captain Simmons I'll be up on deck myself as soon as I've finished this piece of bacon."

With a grin and a salute, the sailor departed, and turning back to the table, Tony gazed triumphantly at Guy and Molly.

"Well, my children," he observed, "what did Uncle tell you?"

"Well, we've started," Molly said with a little triumphant laugh. "Can I come up with you?"

Tony shook his head. "I think you had better lie low for the present," he answered. "You're the queen of trumps in this game, Molly, and we don't want to play you too soon."

Molly looked a trifle disappointed, but she raised no objection. "All right," she said obediently. "I'll save myself up for the king."

Tony rose from the table. "I'll bring Jimmy down as soon as he's on board," he said. "You had better get out the whisky and soda. He's sure to be hungry."

HE left the cabin, followed by Guy, and making his way up the companion, stepped out on the smooth and spotless deck.

The *Betty* had slowed down almost completely, and only a faint ripple in her wake showed that she was still moving. Hove to, a little distance ahead, lay a small cutter of about seven tons, from which a dinghy with a couple of men on board was just putting out.

They rowed rapidly across the intervening water so as to cut off the yacht, and timing it to perfection, reached their destination just as she was practically ceasing to move. An accommodation ladder had been let down over the side, and Jimmy, a stout and happy-looking young gentleman who was crouching in the bows, grabbed hold of it neatly as it came alongside. The next moment he had scrambled on board, and the boat with its solitary occupant was drifting away astern.

" 'Once aboard the lugger—' " observed the newcomer in an extraordinarily soft voice, and then with a faint chuckle he stepped forward and clasped Tony's outstretched hand. "Hope I haven't come too early?" he added cheerfully.

Tony wrung his hand, and taking a pace backward, surveyed him with affectionate approval.

"My dear Jimmy," he said, "you come like the flowers in May."

"And I may mention," added Jimmy, transferring his grip to Guy, "that I come after a prolonged and distressing drought."

Tony smiled happily. "I have ordered breakfast for you," he said. "We will go straight down, as soon as I have introduced you to the skipper."

Captain Simmons, who had left the bridge, was advancing along the deck toward them.

"This is my friend Jimmy Dale, Captain," said Tony. "He is one of the most distinguished citizens of Portriga."

"That so?" said the skipper, extending a huge brown paw. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Dale. Perhaps you can tell us what's going on ashore, and whether we're likely to hit any trouble if we run straight on into Braxa."

"I shouldn't think so," replied Jimmy in his soft and pleasing voice. "As far as I know, all the able-bodied officials in Braxa have pushed off to Portriga to join in the looting. I believe there are one or two policemen left, but I don't suppose they are awake yet."

"We wont disturb 'em," said the Captain. "We'll come in nice and quiet, and let 'em have their nap out. Do you know the harbor at all, Mr. Dale?"

"Pretty fair," said Jimmy. "I've been out fishing in it a good number of times."

"Well, perhaps when we get round the head, you wouldn't mind coming up on the bridge. I've never been in here before, and there might be one or two points I'd be glad of a little information about."

"I'll bring him along," said Tony. "How soon will he be wanted?"

"Oh, there's no hurry," replied the Captain genially. "Plenty o' time for a good breakfast. We sha'n't be off the head for another twenty minutes yet."

He turned to retrace his steps, and after offering Jimmy a cigarette, Tony started to lead the way below.

MOLLY was still sitting at the table when they entered the saloon, and at the unexpected sight, Jimmy's good-natured countenance betrayed a momentary surprise and embarrassment.

"Ah, I forgot to tell you we had a friend with us," said Tony easily. "Let me introduce you. The Reverend Mr. Monk—my old pal, Jimmy Dale."

They shook hands gravely—an action which proved nearly too much even for the sedate Guy, who turned away hastily to hide his expression.

"Dear old James!" said Tony. "It's so nice to see you again. Have some eggs and bacon?"

Jimmy sat down at the table and automatically pulled the whisky and soda toward himself.

"I'll have anything that's going," he replied obligingly. "But what I should like best of all are a few explanations. At present I feel as if I was taking a small part in a cinematograph film."

He squirted a modest supply of soda into his tumbler and accepted the well-supplied plate Molly handed across to him.

"You shall have everything in a minute if you are good and patient," said Tony encouragingly. "To start with, however, there are one or two questions we want to ask you. You mayn't be aware of it, Jimmy, but at the present moment you are a very valuable and important person."

"I felt it," said Jimmy, "I felt it directly I stepped on board." He took a deep and apparently very welcome drink, and set down the tumbler.

"We want you to tell us," went on Tony, "exactly what's been happening in Livadia since the day before yesterday. We know all about the beginning of the revolution, but we are not quite up to date with the last part."

"The day before yesterday," repeated Jimmy thoughtfully. "Let's see—that was Thursday, wasn't it? There's been such a lot of blood and noise and free drinks about that I've got a bit mixed up in my dates." He paused to take a large mouthful of egg and bacon. "Thursday," he continued a little indistinctly, "was just about the brightest and breeziest day we've had. It was the morning that Almaida made his big attack on the Royalists, and they were scrapping from eight o'clock until three or four in the afternoon. They would have gone on longer, only all the wine-shops had been cleaned out by then, and everybody was so thirsty they had to stop."

"And what happened?" asked Guy. "Who got the best of it?"

"Well, I suppose it was more or less of a drawn battle," returned Jimmy indifferently. "Almaida managed to cross the river and bag the railway station and the town hall, but as they'd both been burned to the ground, I don't suppose he got much for his trouble. It was quite a merry little romp while it lasted, though."

TONY reached across for the whisky and helped himself to a companion peg.

" 'What did you do in the great war, Daddy?' " he inquired.

"Me!" said Jimmy. "Oh, I was a very good little boy. I hoisted the Union Jack and stopped in my own house, and when anyone tried the front door, I fired at them out the window. I don't think I hit anybody—I'm such a putrid shot with a revolver."

"Well, you did your best," said Tony consolingly, "and that's all that really matters."

Jimmy shook his head. "I used up a lot of cartridges," he objected, "and they cost no end of money out here. Besides, I should like to have slaughtered just one Livadian. One doesn't often get the chance of doing such a good turn to humanity."

"But how about the revolution?" broke in Guy, a trifle impatient. "What happened after the fighting came to an end?"

"Oh, the fighting didn't come to an end," returned Jimmy. "It was only the battle. People went on shooting each other privately, all right, and next morning there was some sort of an attempt at another general engagement. It was nothing like Thursday, however, because both sides were running short of ammunition. However, I thought it seemed healthier indoors, so I stayed where I was until about three o'clock, when I suddenly noticed that the shooting was beginning to stop, and that the people were gathering together into groups and jawing and jabbering like a lot of monkeys. I guessed that something had happened; so I loaded up my revolver and shoved on a hat and tootled out into the sunshine."

He paused to select a cigar from the case which Tony was holding out to him.

"Almost the first person I ran into," he went on, "was a man I happened to know. I asked him what was up, and he told me that there was a report all over town that Pedro and Da Freitas had just arrived from England with Don Francisco's daughter, and that she and the King were going to be married at once. Well, of course that put the hat on everything, so to speak. Whatever Almaida's private notions may have been, he was nominally fighting to make this girl Queen of Livadia, and if she was really going to be married to Pedro, the whole thing was nothing but an infernal farce." He coughed and turned to Molly. "Sorry, Padre," he added apologetically. "Forgot you were here."

Molly inclined her head gravely, and once again Guy turned away to conceal his emotions.

"Go on, James," said Tony in a reassuring voice. "You needn't be afraid of shocking Mr. Monk. He has been chaplain to a bishop."

"There's not so very much more to tell," said Jimmy. "At first, of course, most of Almaida's people thought it was just a bluff on the part of the Royalists—a sort of trick to try and upset 'em and then catch 'em on the hop. By six o'clock, however, posters and bills began to be shoved up all over the place. No one seemed to know who was doing it, but there they were as large as life, saying that the marriage would come off in the cathedral on Sunday morning, and calling upon all the Franciscans to lay down their arms.

"I was coming back home, when I found one of them stuck up on the post-office wall, almost exactly opposite my house. I stopped to have a look, and while I was reading it, a chap came sidling down the street and pulled up alongside of me. He was a pretty average-looking sort of scoundrel, with a dirty bandage round his head instead of a cap. I could see that he was squinting at me out of the corner of his eye, and I was just wondering whether I'd better move on quietly or plug him hard on the jaw, when he suddenly asked me in a hoarse whisper if I was the Señor James Dale. I told him I was, and then to my utter astonishment he gabbled out some message to the effect that you were coming to Livadia and that the *Betty* was expected at Braxa early this morning. It fairly took my breath away for a minute, and before I could ask him a single question, some more people came round the corner of the street, and he skidded off like a rat when it sees a terrier."

Tony laughed softly. "Have another drink, James," he suggested. "I'm sorry to have given you these nervous shocks, but we were rather hard pressed for time."

"Oh, I rallied all right," said Jimmy, helping himself to a second peg. "It was a bit of a thunderbolt for a moment, but knowing your taste in amusements, I realized at once that it was just the sort of time you would choose for a pleasure-trip to Livadia. Of course I hadn't a notion how you had managed to get the message through to me, but after all, that didn't really matter. The great thing was to get to Braxa in time to meet you."

He paused to refresh himself.

"HOW did you manage it?" inquired Guy. "I suppose there are no trains running, or anything of that sort."

"The only thing that's running in Livadia at the present moment is blood," returned Jimmy cheerfully. "Fortunately for me, however, I'd got a car. I sneaked it out of the garage quietly on Monday when the trouble started, and I had it locked up in a sort of outhouse at the back of my place. I knew of course that I hadn't a dog's chance of getting out of the town with it on my own, so without fooling around I went straight off to the British Consulate, which is quite close to where I live. I managed to get hold of Watson himself, and he gave me a letter saying that I was a British subject, and if anybody interfered with me all sorts of giddy things would happen to him. Of course, it wasn't exactly a gilt-edged security in a time like this; still, it was the best thing I could get, and I thought that with the help of a bit of bluff it might pull me through.

"Well, to cut a long yarn short, it did. I had a little trouble on the road, but I reached Braxa at last—about three o'clock this morning, and routed out an old boy that I used to go fishing with. I explained the situation to him—more or less—and we came to the conclusion that the best plan would be to pick you up outside the harbor. He helped me stuff away the car in an old shed he's got up at the top of the jetty; then we just tumbled into his boat, and—and—well, here we are." He leaned back and surveyed his companions. "And now," he added placidly, "perhaps you'll be kind enough to let me know what the devil it all means."

There was a brief pause.

ONCE more, and this time with a masterly brevity that put all his previous efforts in the shade, Tony proceeded to relate the series of stimulating incidents which had sprung from his chance encounter with Isabel outside the Long Acre flats. Owing to his highly condensed method, it was impossible to avoid a certain obscurity about some of the details, but obedient to his instructions, Jimmy received it all in unquestioning silence.

For a moment after Tony had finished he still remained mute: then with a sudden soft little chuckle he got up.

"My sainted aunt!" he observed. "If ever there was a purple picnic on this earth, it seems to me we've struck it." He paused, as though overwhelmed with the magnificence of the situation. "And this girl," he went on slowly, "this girl who's so like the Princess? Do you really mean to say that you have brought her with you—that you've got her here—on board?"

"We have," replied Tony, "very much so."

Jimmy glanced round the cabin. "Well, where is she? What have you done with her?"

Tony turned his seat in the direction of the Reverend Mr. Monk.

"Get up, Molly," he said. "Get up and make the gentleman a nice courtesy."

With her most bewitching smile Molly rose to her feet and picking up the skirts of her coat in either hand, sank gracefully toward the floor.

For an instant, for just one poignant instant, Jimmy remained gazing at her in open-mouthed incredulity; and then with an apologetic rap on the door the seaman Jackson again presented himself on the threshold.

"If you please, Sir Ant'ny—the Capt'n's compliments, and he'd be glad to see you and the other gentleman on the bridge."

The conclusion of this delightful novel will appear in the next—the September—issue of THE GREEN BOOK MAGAZINE.

The Letter-Lady

By
Margery Land May

JOHNNY Dexter hated Bridgeport. Bridgeport had a river. For the past three months his had been the task of building a bridge across it.

It was a big task, inasmuch as it was an irritatingly slow one. The congested conditions of the railroads had made it almost impossible to get materials. Labor was to be had only at a premium and sometimes not even then. Already he had had to cope with a strike and the washing out of one of the spans of his bridge; and now, when his job required his constant attention and all of his time, came this letter from Phyllis.

He got it one morning as he was passing through the lobby of the Atlas Hotel on his way to the dining-room.

"Letter for you, Mr. Dexter," the gold-toothed clerk called to him.

Handing him the letter, the clerk smirked and gave him a friendly wink. He had seen the handwriting on that envelope—that dainty, violet-colored, rose-fragrant envelope—many times before. He leaned forward confidentially, toothpick in hand.

"Looks like it might be from a lady friend," he said.

Dexter's bronzed, strongly-modeled face fell into scowling lines. Gold teeth, toothpicks and officious clerks were all, he thought, significant of Bridgeport and its smug surroundings.

Seated in the dining-room at his accustomed table, Dexter opened Phyllis' letter slowly. He had an unaccountable feeling that there was something in it he would rather not read. Phyllis, pansy-eyed, frou-frou thing that she was, had proven an exacting fiancée.

As if to crystallize Dexter's premonitions, the letter, in a scrawly, girlish hand, began coolly enough:

> Dear John:
> I got your letter—the first one in a week—this morning. In spite of its pages of excuses, I really don't see why you can't manage to get away for the Red Cross dance. You promised you would. It's going to be perfectly lovely, and I think it would look too queer for me to go with anyone but you.

There followed inconsequent woman-talk of this party and that tea, of the new motor her father had bought and the shopping she was doing for her trousseau. Then the meager note came to an end with:

> To get back to the dance: if you'd rather not, you needn't bother about it. I forgot to say Billy Patterson wrote me he'd soon be down from camp on a furlough. Perhaps I could get him to take me. Let me know, so I can make my plans.

To this there was added a postscript:

> I miss you terribly, and I do hope when we're married you wont expect me to go to any out-of-the-way places like Bridgeport. I can't abide little towns. I don't see how you can stand them. Are you sure there isn't a good-looking girl in Bridgeport who constitutes its attraction for you?

AS Dexter finished reading this, there crept into his fine gray eyes a dreary look. Why did women contort plain facts into ugly fiction and then worry their silly little heads over vain imaginings? Did Phyllis think he enjoyed being in Bridgeport? Was there anything, he asked himself, to enjoy in the beastly bootlegging little hole?

He had taken this engineering job for the sole purpose of making enough money to finance their honeymoon, and yet when he was down here slaving from the ungodly morning hour when he arose until late at night, when he dropped into bed too dog-tired sometimes to take off more than his boots, she accused him of reveling in the bleakness and drudgery of it all!

Life is hard, he thought, particularly the part one has to spend with women. Shoving the letter into one coat pocket and pulling *The Bridgeport Times* out of the other, he began alternately to eat his bacon and eggs and scan the morning news.

He had finished his breakfast and was just about to put the paper aside when his eye chanced on a unique advertisement. It ran:

> *Can You Write a Tactful Letter? Do You Know What to Say When Called Upon to Pen Notes of Congratulation, Condolence, Acceptance or Thanks?*
>
> *Can You Extract Yourself from a Delicate or Embarrassing Position by Means of Your Pen?*
>
> *If Not, Let*
> VIRGINIA PAGE
> 33 OAKDALE AVENUE
> *Solve Your Letter Difficulties*
> *Satisfaction Guaranteed*

Dexter threw back his head and laughed aloud. Several people glanced up, but Dexter did not see them. He was reading that astonishing ad again and yet again. He chuckled to himself. Jove, it was good! He'd have to cut it out and send it to Phyllis.

He reached in his pocket for his knife, but a sudden thought arrested his hand, and a wide, boyish grin spread over his face. He was the poorest letter-writer in the world. He always made a mess of trying to explain things on paper. What he didn't know about diplomatic correspondence would fill a Carnegie library. Suppose—just for fun—suppose he went and took a look at this Virginia Page of the quill-driving proclivities? Suppose, just for a lark, of course, he got Miss Page to write Phyllis a letter which would both appeal to her reason and soothe her wounded pride?

As he swung up the shrub-bordered path which led to the house of the epistolary Miss Page, he wondered, in a casual sort of way, what she looked like. Letting his hand fall on the brass door-knocker, he envisaged her a typical *bas bleu*—tall, sparse and spectacled, with thin, clawlike hands and hair that was black and plastered down. He shuddered.

HIS knock was answered by a fat mammy in a red bandanna who waddled to the door, fanning her round, shiny face with her apron.

"Yo' want lil miss? Yassuh. She's in de gyarden, suh. Jes take de path to yo' lef' and go round to de back."

The path led him through a harlequin garden of myriad flowers. He had never seen such a garden. It seemed to stretch ahead of him as far as his eyes could reach. It was rainbow-hued with its beds of white and pink and flame-colored azaleas and its golden splurge of poppies. There were roses, too—pink ones, yellow ones, red ones—all bordered in by rows of soldier-straight tulips. In the midst of the flowers was a fountain — an old-fashioned fountain such as Dexter had read about, with moss at the base and a jolly little frog perched on the stones in its bowl. Around this were clusters and clusters of violets, and stooping near the violets there was a girl with a trowel in her hand and a drooping garden-hat on her gold-dusted head.

Dexter almost stumbled against her before he saw her. She looked up with eyes which he immediately likened to the violets over which she was bending. She said:

"Good morning. I'm Virginia Page. Can I do anything for you?"

"You see, I came across your ad this morning in the paper—" he floundered. She came promptly to his rescue.

"You want to see me about letters, of course." She rose and put the trowel on the edge of the fountain. "In the spring and summer," she explained as she walked in front of him, moving, so he thought, as if to music, "I keep shop in my arbors." She looked back over her shoulder and up into his face. "It's a pity to miss the sunlight by shutting one's self indoors, don't you think? The sunlight and the flowers?"

"I've never seen such flowers," he told her and then promised himself that when Phyllis and he were married, theirs would be just such a riotously colorful garden. An instant later he corrected that mental promise. He suddenly remembered that Phyllis had decided they were to live in the fashionable Harcourt apartments, which, of course, admitted of no such rural delights as a blossom-studded yard.

The girl led him to an arbor over which Dorothy Perkins roses clambered in enchanting profusion and pinkness. The arbor was wicker-furnished with deep chairs, a table on which stood ferns, and a desk at which Miss Page, after motioning Dexter to a chair, seated herself.

Then, tactfully, she assisted him by saying:

"How can I help you? What is it? A letter of sympathy, of congratulation, or condolence? A business problem, or what?"

"None of those," he answered gravely. Then an understanding smile on her mobile, sweet-lipped mouth brought a relaxing one to his own.

She rested her cheek on her hand and turned her eyes to his. "Is it," she suggested tentatively, "a letter to a girl?"

He gave a jerky nod.

She drew a pad of paper and a pencil from a cubby-hole in her desk, and assuming a crisp, businesslike air, said in matter-of-fact tones:

"Tell me about it. Don't be afraid. I'm the repository of more confidences and confessions than you can imagine. Already this morning I've written—she told them off on her fingers—"a letter to a runaway wife, another to an angry Adam who's shut the gates on a penitent Eve and a diplomatic epistle to a fractious mother-in-law who has a grudge against her son's wife. So, you see, I'm used to handling—" Her voice trailed off inquiringly.

HE smiled gravely. "I have a fiancée," he began.

"A fiancée who wont behave?"

He nodded. "Exactly." He leaned forward, interlocked hands dropped between his knees. "My name's Dexter, John Dexter. I'm building the bridge across the river at Strawberry Point. I'm up to my neck in work. For the most part, I bunk in a shack on the river-bank where I can keep an eye on things—particularly on my men. The job's not easy. I tell you this because it explains what the trouble's about."

He looked up at her questioningly. She nodded. He went on:

"Before I left Nashville, my engagement to Miss Phyllis Owens was announced. Unfortunately, I had already agreed to do this work in Bridgeport, so I had to leave her. Besides, there's money in the job. For a while things went smoothly. Then I began to have troubles. My men struck. I had a washout. I didn't have time to write Phyllis much. Naturally enough, she became dissatisfied." He smiled ruefully.

"You see—" He glanced up to find her eyes, sweet and grave, brooding upon him. He paused to drink her in as she sat there, flower-fresh in the white-and-gold radiance of youth and the springlike coolness of her fluttery green frock. Then he looked away sharply and went on:

"You see, I had half promised her I'd run up to Nashville for a Red Cross dance she helped get up. I find I can't go. Couldn't possibly manage it and do the right thing by my contract. Well," he frowned, "she doesn't understand, that's all. She says one of her old friends, Billy Patterson, will be home on a furlough soon—he's a captain in the Reserves—and that if I don't take her to the dance, he will. She hinted"—he hesitated—"that there might be some other girl whom I'd got to know down here—that perhaps I didn't care." He stopped and looked away from her. She waited a moment, then, inflecting her quiet voice with sympathy, she said:

"And so you're worried. Of course you would be. I think"—her smile was comforting—"I understand. Now tell me: just what is it you want me to do?"

He brought his eyes back to hers.

"That's what I don't know. I'm not much of a letter-writer myself. I thought perhaps you could fix me up a letter which would explain my position to her and smooth things over." His thoughts wandered. "I don't suppose," he mumbled, "that I could very well object to Billy taking her to the dance, as long as I'm not to be there. Mustn't go in for that dog-in-the-manger stuff."

"No," she agreed soberly, which shows the perfection of her tact, "you mustn't." She reflected some seconds. Then she began to write.

DEXTER lighted a cigarette and leaned back in his chair. His appreciative glance wandered over the garden with its splashes of brilliant color. A drowsy peacefulness seemed to be brooding. Homely sounds came to him: the trickle of the fountain, the noisy cackle of industrious hens, the "Nea'ah Mah Gawd to Thee" of Mammy as she rattled the kitchen pans, the bark of a dog, and now and then the golden note of a mocking-bird pouring forth like sunshine across the sleepy air. A wind stirred the flowers, making them break forth in newer fragrance. Dexter breathed deep of the caressing odors. Then the scratch of Miss Page's pencil ceased and he heard her say:

"Listen to this, Mr. Dexter.

"'Phyllis dear: I'm answering your letter in the only spare moment I have. It's too bad about the dance, but it's impossible, honey-child. The busy beaver has nothing on me. In these toilsome days I'm beginning to realize that our original parents, Mr. Adam and Mrs. Eve, certainly messed things up when they ate the apple, thus bringing down on men throughout the ages the curse: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." That's certainly what I'm doing these parlous times—eating bridges, dreaming bridges, talking bridges, figuring 'em, living 'em until I'm sick to death of the beastly things. What keeps me going is the realization that this particular bridge means honey for our moneymoon. By all means trot to the dance with old Billy. Do a couple of turns to the jazz band for me. And remember, I love you—lots.

"'JOHNNIE.

"'P. S.—Is there another girl down here whom I've taken a shine to? Foolish question, sweetheart. If this town is inhabited by anything but men, I don't know it. You know what they say about love needing spectacles.

"'P. P. S.—Tell Captain Bill I'm looking to him to make you behave.'"

Miss Page glanced up to find a frown on Dexter's brow.

"What's the trouble?" she asked quickly. "Doesn't it suit? Be honest. I want to know."

Dexter considered some seconds.

"Well, you see," he answered hesitantly, "I like it and all that, but—well Phyllis is rather— Don't you think it's a bit indifferent—a trifle offhand? Mightn't she be piqued?"

She gave a triumphant nod.

"That's exactly what I want her to be!" She leaned forward, gesturing with her pencil. "You see, Mr. Dexter, a woman likes to be bullied. Now, I take it from what you've said that you've been in the habit of allowing—if you'll pardon me for saying it—of allowing Miss Owens to walk over you, and that doesn't pay—really it doesn't. As soon as a girl thinks she owns a man, body, heart and soul, she begins to lose interest. And it's natural she should—especially when the man's away and there are other men decidedly present."

"Yes, I know," Dexter answered slowly. "But don't you think you gave in a little easily about her going to the dance with Billy Patterson? Shouldn't you have raised some objections?"

She shook her bright head and smiled.

"Nary an objection, Mr. Dexter, unless, of course, you want her to think she has you entirely under her thumb. The mere fact that you willingly let her go will set her to thinking. Keep some reserves. Make the girl believe you're an undiscovered country. Make her feel she has to work to hold you."

Dexter pondered this a moment. Then he laughed.

"I begin to get the idea, I think." He rose and stood before her. "Ever since I've been down here, I've been eating humble pie to that baby—asking her pardon for getting out and hustling up a living." His jaw squared; a line drew between his brows. "As you say, it's not good tactics." He held out his hand and grasped hers.

"You're bully," he said. "Thanks awfully. May I have it—the letter?"

She shook her head.

"When it's typed, I'll send it to the Atlas. Of course, you're putting up there?"

He nodded.

"I'm tremendously obliged," he told her. "I dare say I'll come again. I never was much of a hand at letter-writing—especially explaining things. It's so much easier to talk 'em out—particularly with Phyllis."

"I imagine it would be," she said softly, and her expression puzzled him. "Letters are never as eloquent as lips."

It was not until Dexter was in his car chugging away down Oakdale Avenue that he got the full significance of her words. He smiled. Then came a sobering realization which caused him to flush hotly. . . . . Good Lord, he had forgotten to pay her—let it slip by as clean as a whistle! He berated himself for a blundering idiot. But there was nothing he could do about it then. McAfee, his foreman, was waiting for him at the bridge.

STRAWBERRY POINT is ten miles from Bridgeport. Dexter's car broke down just as he got there; so he did not return to town that night. He telephoned the hotel for his mail. When it came, Miss Page's letter was with it. He copied it at midnight by the murky rays of the spluttering oil lamp. Next morning he got it off to Phyllis. Then for four days all he had time to think of was arches and spans, steels, ribs and abutments.

When he finally got back to town, it was Saturday, and he found Phyllis' answer awaiting him. He read it, grinning all the while, as he was walking down the street in the direction of Bridgeport's vaudeville temple, the Majestic Theater.

He had just finished it and slipped it into his pocket when he saw Miss Page ahead of him. He quickened his stride until he reached her. Then, baring his head, he said:

"How do you do? I saw you and wanted to say I'd gotten an answer to our letter."

She looked her surprise at seeing him and smiled.

"Splendid! And it was satisfactory? But I needn't ask. You look happy enough."

Dexter responded with a laugh.

"You bet I am!" He hesitated a moment. "Don't you think we might celebrate our success—yours, rather? What shall it be—a movie, a motor-ride or a glance at the colorful bill at the Majestic? It's a choice between evils, I know, but—" He stopped and beamed down at her with his boyish grin.

"The colorful bill at the Majestic, by all means," she replied quickly.

Skillfully he guided her through the crowds thronging the entrance of the theater. When they were seated in the shrouded darkness of the house, he said:

"Tell me something about yourself."

"There's not much to tell," she informed him in a low voice.

"Oh, yes, there must be," he insisted. "How, for instance, did you start this unique profession of yours? I'd like to know. I'm interested."

Miss Page allowed her eyes to drift toward the stage where a winsome thing in hooped skirts and frilly pantalettes was smiling beneath a coy poke bonnet. Suddenly the winsome thing began to sing "Way Down upon the S'wanee River," and just as suddenly, Dexter heaved a sigh. Leaning closer to Miss Page, he whispered:

"I'll bet this is the first time she's ever been south of the Mason-Dixon line. Just listen to those *r-r-r-r-r's!*"

THE girl's subdued laughter came to him through the gloom. All at once the electric fans along the sides of the walls were turned on; all at once Dexter felt something soft and fragrant and silken blowing across his cheek. Against his flesh the satin touch of her hair was as light and sharp as fire. When he spoke, his voice was a little thickened and breathless. He said:

"Don't look at her. Talk to me. Everyone talks in here. I want to know how you started professional letter-writing."

She turned to him quiet eyes. He

could see the serene light of them even in that semidarkness. She answered softly:

"When Uncle died, all he left was the place where I live. I was in Chicago studying English at the University, hoping some day to be a writer. But writing, of course, is slow. My professional ink-slinging is what keeps the cupboard from getting bare. Of course, I'm always dreaming that one day I shall write one of the six best sellers."

Dexter gave her a searching look. He guessed rightly that she had had a struggle.

"Good work," he said crisply—briefly, because just then he wouldn't have trusted himself to say more. Pluck and grit in women always stirred him.

The curtain went up on the second act of the program—a man doing fancy twists and turns on an elevated swing.

"Awful, isn't it?" Dexter remarked. "Suppose we leave the rest of 'em holding the bag and motor out to the Linger-Longer gardens for a cup of tea?"

"That's not a half-bad suggestion. Then, you see,"—she reminded him of the business note in their relationship,—"you can tell me what the effect of our letter was."

Dexter turned crimson. It came over him with sickening force that he had forgotten all about Phyllis and her letter—had forgotten everything save the fact that he was with a woman whose white-and-gold loveliness stirred him and whose high courage had its appeal.

As they reached the street and walked in the direction of the hotel where his car was parked, she said again:

"You haven't told me how you are getting on with the bridge of contention." She shot him a quick look from beneath thick lashes. "Your money-moon bridge," she smiled.

At the mention of his work the man became all intentness. Thought was in his eyes as he said, more to himself than to her:

"Things are coming through well—better than I expected. If only my piers aren't undermined, I ought to get through in a jiffy." His face became vivid, set, compelling. She drew him out. As he talked his manner took on a whiplash, driving force. He spoke in telegraphic sentences of the things he loved—his tunnels, his ditches, his bridges.

He straightened his big shoulders and took deep breaths of air.

"It's the battle of it I love," he told her.

THEY reached the place where his car was parked, and he helped her into its passenger seat.

"And now," she said as he set the motor to droning and let in the clutch, "tell me news of our letter."

He gave her a look. His eyes admired the verve of her, her slenderness, her boyish grace. He said:

"It worked nobly—especially the part about Billy. She went to the dance, but not with him." He grinned. "Said she couldn't understand my being willing to let her do it. Asked me what was the matter. Said I am different and 'perfectly' queer. Phyl just harps on that word 'perfectly.' " He was silent a moment; then: "She sent me oceans of love and a lot of crisscross kisses. You're a wizard!"

She laughed that sweet, throaty laugh which set his heart singing.

"My advertisement says 'Satisfaction Guaranteed,' doesn't it?" She gestured as she talked, and in turning the steering-wheel, Dexter's hand came into contact with hers. Again he felt the light, sharp sensation of having been burned. Dark blood mounted to his tanned face. He was all muddled. He tried to think—to visualize Phyllis. He kept his eyes on the road and away from the soft loveliness of the girl. He wished passionately he had never left his bridge.

It was dusk when they drew up before the sprawled-out bungalow on Oakdale Avenue. Dexter walked to the arbor with the girl.

"I left some papers out here—some letters I have to work on to-night," she explained.

He put his hand on her arm and stopped her.

"Did you ever see such a twilight?" he asked. "Such a nestling together of colors! It's like—" He fumbled for adequate words. "It's like a painter's canvas. It's as if—"

"My garden had suddenly been flung up in the sky," she finished triumphantly, "and was looking down at us—smiling down at us."

"Exactly!" he agreed. For a moment they stood gazing at the colorful beauty of the spreading heavens. A gentle breeze, springing from nowhere, suddenly stirred the flowers. Fragrance of rose and honeysuckle bathed them. Stillness pervaded the place like some strange, mystic presence. Dexter looked down at the girl, so slim, so graceful in melting gray. In the twilight her face seemed pale and softly clear. Suddenly he felt stirred. There was a hurry in his blood. His pulse quickened and his breath. All at once something snapped within him. His hands went out to the girl. He got her in his arms. He kissed her, and on her lips his kiss was deep—a palpitating thing.

HE held her there. Then suddenly—just as suddenly as he had clasped her—he let her go. All at once he was six feet away, clinging with the clutch of a drowning man to the framework of the trellis.

Shaking, he stood there, his head drooped and his back turned to the girl.

She came to him. Putting gentle hands on his shoulders, she waited until he had ceased trembling. Then:

"Mr. Dexter—dear Mr. Dexter," she said.

He groped for her hand, found and gripped it.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I am sorry. I didn't mean—"

"Of course not. I understand perfectly. It was loneliness—nothing but sheer loneliness." She hesitated. "Mr. Dexter, would you mind if I suggested something?"

He shook his head. She went on quietly, earnestly.

"I wish you would send for your fiancée. Get her to come here and marry you. These long engagements are such a mistake—really quite too bad. You're so alone. It's natural for you to want sympathy and companionship. All of us do."

His fingers tightened about hers, but he kept his eyes averted.

"Do you think—she would? The place is so small, so unlike what she's used to. I may be here six months more—perhaps even longer than that. I can't tell." A drawn look came into his face. "Do you believe she would?"

The eyes she lifted to his were profoundly tender.

"That's nonsense! Of course she would if she loves you. What difference does it make *where* we are, as long as we're with our loved ones?" Then, as a cloud settled on his face, she added reassuringly: "But she does love you. We both know that. And she will come. We know that too. Promise me you'll write her to-night."

His eyes traveled out over the garden which was now shrouded in the deep blue of nightfall. He was thoughtful. At last he brought her hands to his lips.

"I promise," he said gruffly and then tore himself away—to write the letter.

All day Sunday he was miserable and idle.

The next morning when he reached Strawberry Point he was greeted by the excitement of impending danger to the piers of his bridge. During the night, masses of débris and driftwood, floating down from upstream, had lodged against one of the piles supporting the second span of the bridge, thus causing an undermining undercurrent. To get rid of that drift, to stop that destructive current, to save that spile, and if not, to drive another, in order to prevent a washout of his span—these became his problems.

He met them with sleeves rolled up, with muscles taut and eager and swelling. There were several men short, and he laid his bare strength to the job. He squared his jaws. A fighting look came into his eyes as he gazed down at the river.

AT the end of the first day he got a telegram. He was snatching a bite, his first in twelve hours, when the boy brought the message to his shack. He ripped open the envelope, glanced at the words written on the yellow slip of paper and strode to the phone.

"Miss Page? This is Mr. Dexter. I need some help from you." He waited for her to answer. Then he went on hurriedly: "I just got an answer to my letter. A telegram. I'll read it to you." He unfolded the message and read: " 'Must talk to you immediately. Very important. Expect you to leave for Nashville at once. Could not possibly agree to your suggestion. Will explain when you arrive.' "

He crunched the telegram in his strong fingers and asked: "Get it? Good! Now, what I want you to do is to fix me up some sort of letter that will explain things to her. I'm in the deuce of a pickle up here. Two of my piers have been undermined. I've got to drive new ones and drive 'em quick if I want to save my span. I haven't time to eat, let alone write letters, and I've got to stick to my job. Send the letter up here to me by a messenger. I'll get it copied somehow. Thanks—and listen! You're a brick!" As he hung up the receiver, McAfee burst into the shack.

"Some more drift's floating down this way, boss. We'll have to head it off before it reaches the bridge."

Dexter jammed his battered felt hat on his head.

"All right. Lead me to it!" he cried, and together the two men swung off toward the bank of the river.

It was midnight when Dexter, soaked to the skin and caked with red mud, got to his shack again.

He found Miss Page's letter waiting for him, and so, stupid and dazed from lack of sleep and from hours of physical toil, he sat down in front of his soap-box table and copied it in pencil.

He was hardly conscious of what he was writing. All he knew was that the letter was sound and sane and reasonable—just the sort that a busy, level-headed man would pen to a silly, evanescent little thing like Phyllis Owens. He was too tired to be cognizant of more than that.

At the end of the original draft of the letter was a note from Miss Page.

> **Don't get downhearted, whatever you do. Keep up your courage, both about the bridge and about the girl. I'm sure this letter will be as effective as our last one was. A woman's bark, like a puppy's, is always worse than her bite. Anyway, I hope this will do. I tried to make it as convincing as possible. Good luck to you.**
>
> **VIRGINIA PAGE.**

Dexter smiled and then, with a sigh of weariness, folded the sheets of paper and stuck them in an envelope. He scrawled the address and handed the letter to McAfee.

"Mac, old scout, see that it gets off special delivery, will you?" He yawned and flung himself on the cot. "Lordy, but I'm tired! All tuckered out," he muttered and a moment later was deep in a heavy sleep.

THREE days later, toward dusk, Dexter, clad in khaki breeches and coat, high boots and blue shirt, swung into the lobby of the Atlas Hotel. He stopped at the cigar-counter for some cigarettes, lighted one and sauntered over to the desk, where the gold-toothed clerk was again in evidence.

"Any mail for me?" he asked, and then, because he had saved his span and all was consequently right with the world, he tendered the gold-toothed one a cigar. "Have a smoke?"

"Sure Mike. A fair exchange aint no thievery. I've got a letter here for you from your girl." He grinned, and Dexter smiled back genially.

"Thanks," he said and crossed the lobby to a leather chair.

He puffed at his cigarette a few moments before he opened Phyllis' letter, and he thought of some one whose hair was like rippling sunlight and whose eyes, thick-lashed and soft, were blue—all fascinating sorts of blue—dark and light and purplish.

He thought of the picture she had made that day he saw her kneeling beside the violet beds, caressed by the honeyed sunshine and the impassioned clamorings of the birds. He thought of her ever-willing sweetness, her gay good-humor, her tranquil poise. He thought of the yielding softness of her mouth which he had kissed that once.

He thought, until his cigarette burned out in a long ash and burned his fingers. Then he started; color stormed up in his face; he opened Phyllis' letter—and found it to be a thing of incandescent fire.

> Dear John:
>
> Your paternal letter arrived this morning. It was hardly convincing. You write that you cannot leave Bridgeport because you *must* be there to superintend the work you're doing. You say it will probably be *months* before the bridge is completed. You ask *me*, of *all* people, to leave my *home* and *all* my friends and interests and bury myself with you in that impossible place.
>
> Really, my dear boy, you must have lost your mind! Your very suggestion proves that you haven't one single bit of consideration for me or my wishes. To tell you the truth, I've always considered your working in Bridgeport a *whim*. You can't tell me that a man of your capabilities has to go to such *unheard-of* places in order to make a living. To be *perfectly* frank with you, John, if you intend nosing around in all corners of the globe after we are married, I hardly think you are the sort of man who can make me happy.
>
> There are certain things I do demand—civilization is one of them. Your *utter* disregard for my wishes as expressed in my telegram struck me as being absolutely *unfeeling*. However, I'm going to give you one more chance. Leave Bridgeport at once and for always and come to me immediately, or else consider our engagement broken.
>
> Hastily yours,
> PHYLLIS.

DEXTER got to his feet with a smothered oath. Livid with anger, he swung across the lobby to the telephone-booths. In a moment he had Miss Page on the wire.

"Look here, Miss Page, I've got something to show you. Let me come over, will you? I look like a tramp. You don't mind? Good! What was that? I sound fierce? Well, that's just exactly how I feel. I'll be over in a jiffy to tell you all about it."

When he reached Miss Page's house, he did not have to knock, for she was awaiting him at the door. She gave him a quick, searching glance, and then without a word led him into a cozy sitting-room. It was furnished in fumed oak and wicker and was softly lighted with rose lamps. Books and flowers were about. On the table were scattered papers. Dexter guessed she had been working when he phoned.

When she reached the table, she stopped and wheeled about.

"What is it?" she asked. "Has anything happened?"

He gave her Phyllis' letter. "Read this."

Her fingers trembled as she read. Two little flushes blossomed beneath her eyes. Her lips compressed into a straight line. Her expression hardened. She looked up at last.

"Well?" she said inquiringly. "Well?"

Crimson with anger he stared back at her.

"What do you think of it?" he demanded, his voice suddenly gone harsh.

She sat down at the table and cupped her hands, resting her chin upon them.

"I don't know what to think," she answered slowly.

"There must be *something* you can do," he said, a hopelessness in his manner that belied his words. He sank into a wicker chair and passed a tired hand across his forehead.

After a while he looked up. She was busily writing. She paused for a moment, tapping her pencil nervously, her eyes looking unseeingly at him. Then again she wrote.

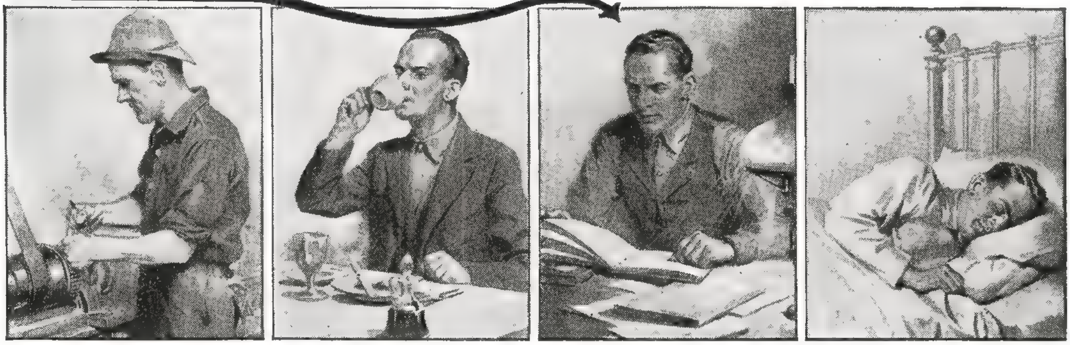
At last, with a flourish of the pencil and a bright little bob of her head, she arose and came to him.

In a most unbusinesslike way she sat on the arm of his chair, and they read together the letter she had written.

> Dear Phyllis:
>
> I don't know why I have been such an awful ass. Of course I'm not your sort. I might have known it all along. However, I have just discovered it—by meeting some one whose sort I am. *My* job is here in Bridgeport. I shall not leave it. You may be interested to know that my life is here and my happiness also.
>
> JOHN.

The only businesslike part of the conversation that followed was when Dexter said: "This letter is certainly O. K." He ruined even that, however, by adding, "darling."

These Are The Hours That Count



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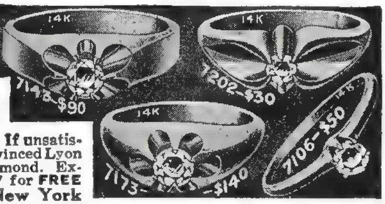

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Elsie Janis, a favorite everywhere says: "I am delighted with Cutex. I have just finished my nails and find it most wonderful"

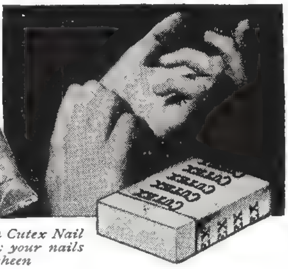
Send for the Midget Manicure Set offered below and see how completely Cutex solves your problem. In the Cutex package you will find orange stick and absorbent cotton. Wrap a little cotton around the end of the stick and dip it into the bottle. Work the stick around the base of the nail, gently pushing back the cuticle.

A touch of Cutex Nail White underneath the nails, applied directly from its convenient tube, will make them immaculately clean—snony white.

Finish with Cutex Nail Polish. It will give your nails the quick, waterproof finish you want. If you like an especially brilliant polish, use Cutex Paste Polish first, then the Cake Polish.

Until you have used Cutex you cannot know what a great improvement even the first application makes in your nails. You have no idea how lovely they can be.

A touch of Cutex Nail White underneath the nails gives them snowy white tips



Finish with Cutex Nail Polish; gives your nails a delightful sheen

Buy Cutex in all drug or department stores

Cutex, the cuticle remover comes in 30c, 60c and $1.25 bottles. Cutex Nail White is 30c. Cutex Nail Polish, in Cake, Paste, Powder, Liquid or Stick form, is 30c. Cutex Cuticle Comfort for sore or tender cuticle is also 30c. If your store has not yet secured a stock, write direct. Address

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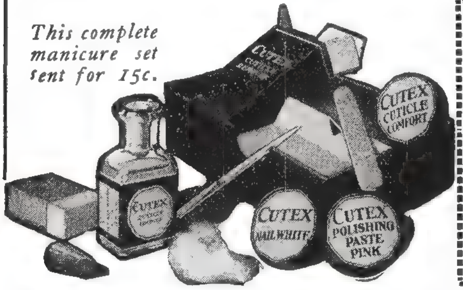
Send the coupon today with 15c—10c for the manicure set and 5c for packing and postage—and we will send you a complete manicure set, enough for at least six "manicures."



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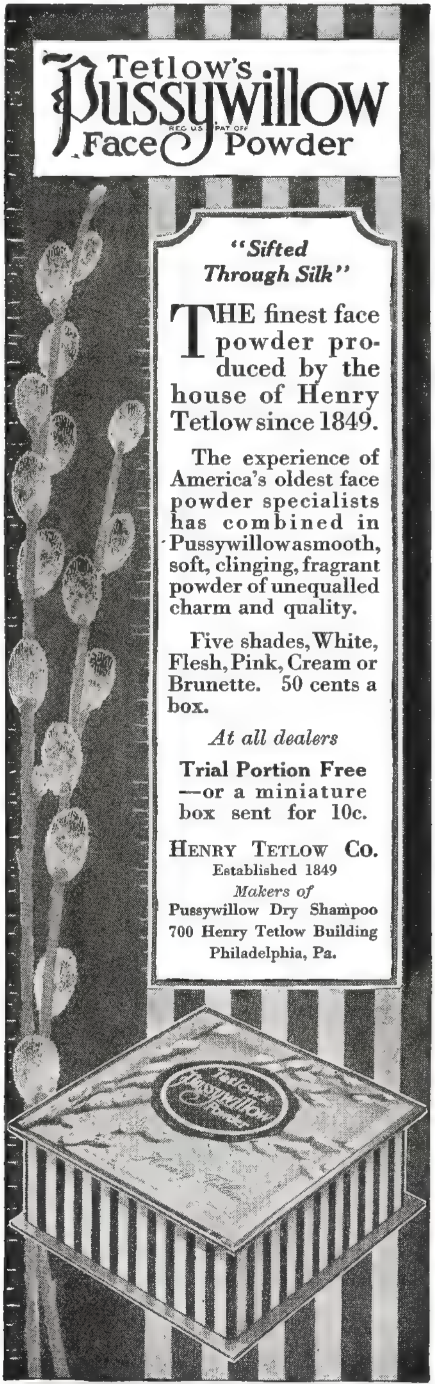

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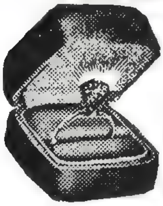

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......Dental School
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......Engineering School
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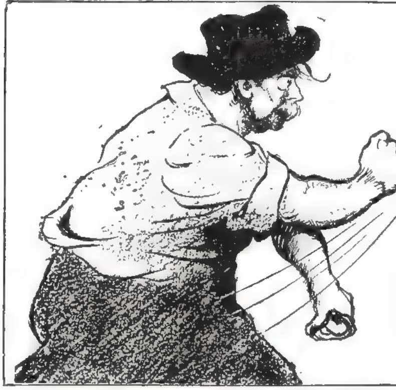

He's on the Warpath

NOBODY'S happy in his family, for some scoundrel stole their copy of the August BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE and took all the joy out of life. Son had been looking forward a whole month to reading Edwin Balmer's new war-story "Contact Patrol." Daughter just had to read Will Levington Comfort's "The Dun Camel Kneels." Mother always counted on the next Albert Payson Terhune story — and he himself had just started that wonderful novel "The Land That Time Forgot," by Edgar Rice Burroughs, author of "Tarzan."

Don't risk missing *your* August issue of—

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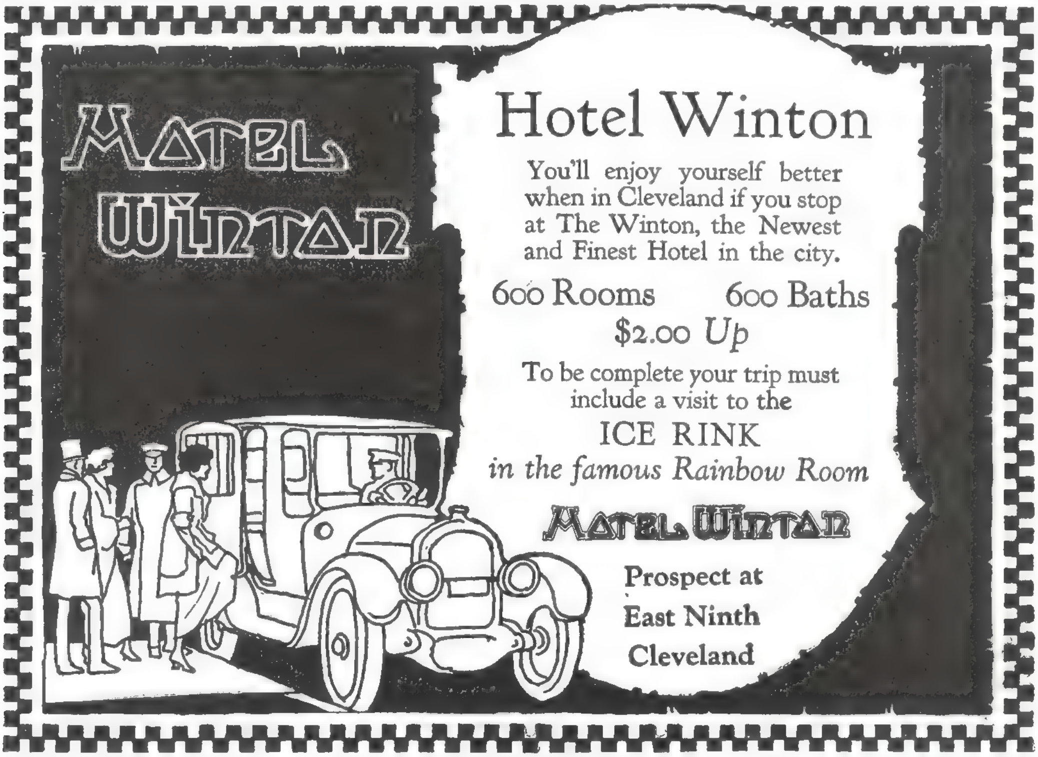

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The September issue will appear on August 12th. Forms close in Chicago July 27th, by which time order, copy, and remittance must be in our hands.

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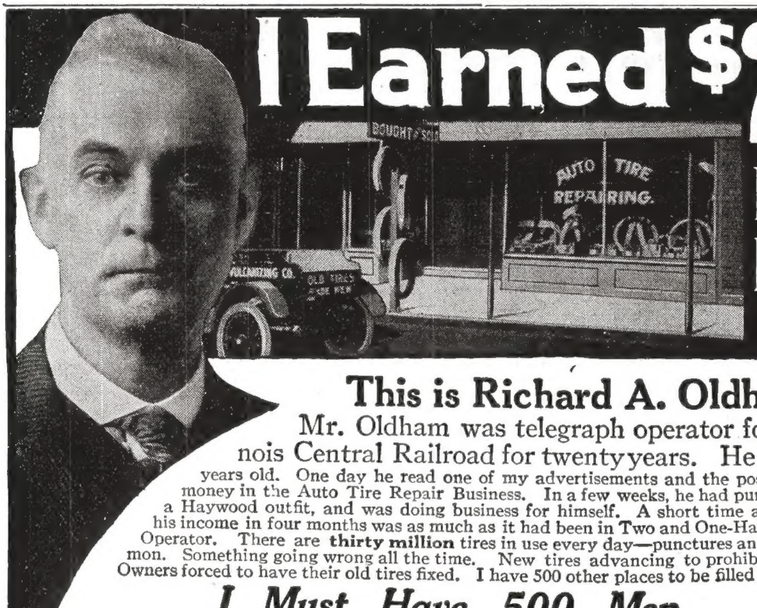
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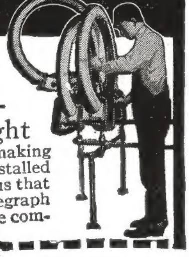

This is Richard A. Oldham

Mr. Oldham was telegraph operator for the Illinois Central Railroad for twenty years. He is fifty-eight years old. One day he read one of my advertisements and the possibilities of making money in the Auto Tire Repair Business. In a few weeks, he had purchased and installed a Haywood outfit, and was doing business for himself. A short time ago he wrote us that his income in four months was as much as it had been in Two and One-Half years as Telegraph Operator. There are **thirty million** tires in use every day—punctures and blow outs are common. Something going wrong all the time. New tires advancing to prohibitive prices. Owners forced to have their old tires fixed. I have 500 other places to be filled now.

I Must Have 500 Men

to fill these places within the next 60 days

I have a big interesting book to send you—a book about tires—it tells all about them—how they are repaired by the Haywood method—explains this business—gives inside figures, and profit. Gives actual proof of success. What these men have done you can do. $2500 to $4000 a year is conservative. One machine will give you a start. All you do is open a shop—put out a Haywood sign, and auto owners will come to you. There is a big opportunity awaiting you.

Sign the coupon and mail it today, or send a post card or letter.

M. HAYWOOD, Pres. HAYWOOD TIRE & EQUIPMENT CO. 926 Capitol Avenue, INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

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DEAR SIR:—Please send me your book on Haywood Tire Repair Plants and full particulars on your National Tire Repair Service and details of your FREE school of tire repairing.

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famous Photoplay Star recommends "Lash-Brow-Ine"

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They add wonderfully to one's beauty, charm and expression. A little *Lash-Brow-Ine* applied nightly, will nourish the eyebrows and lashes making them grow long, thick and lustrous. Guaranteed absolutely harmless. Used successfully by thousands. Send 50c and we will mail you generous size "Lash-Brow-Ine" and Maybell Beauty Booklet prepaid in plain cover. Order now, you'll be delighted.

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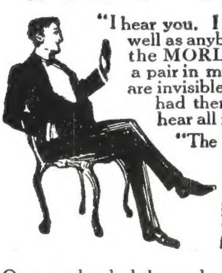

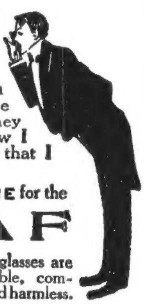

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STORES IN LEADING CITIES

You Can Tell the People Who Have Iron in Their Blood ~ Strong, Healthy, Vigorous Folks

Doctor Says Ordinary Nuxated Iron Will Increase the Strength of Nervous Run-down People in Two Weeks' Time in Many Cases.

ONE glance is enough to tell which people have iron in their blood. They are the ones that do and dare. The others are in the weakling class. Sleepless nights spent worrying over supposed ailments, constant dosing with habit-forming drugs and narcotics and useless attempts to brace up with strong coffee or other stimulants are what keep them suffering and vainly longing to be strong. Their real trouble is lack of iron in the blood, says Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly Physician of Bellevue Hospital, New York, and the Westchester County Hospital. Without iron the blood has no power to change food into living tissue and therefore, nothing you eat does you good; you don't get the strength out of it. When iron is supplied it enriches the impoverished blood and gives the body greater resistance to ward off disease. Numbers of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while have most astonishingly increased their strength and endurance simply by taking iron in the proper form. And this, after they had in some cases been going on for months without getting benefit from anything.

If you are not strong or well you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see for yourself how much you have gained. There is nothing like good old iron to help put color in your cheeks and sound, healthy flesh on your bones. But you must take iron in a form that can be easily absorbed and assimilated like Nuxated Iron if you want it to do you any good, otherwise it may prove worse than useless.

Many an athlete and prize fighter has won the day simply because he knew the secret of great strength and endurance which comes from having plenty of iron in the blood while many another has gone down to inglorious defeat simply for the lack of iron.

In regard to the value of Nuxated Iron, Dr. A. J. Newman, late Police Surgeon of the City of Chicago, and former House Surgeon Jefferson Park Hospital, Chicago, says Nuxated Iron has proven through his own tests of it to excel any preparation he has ever used for creating red blood, building up the nerves and strengthening the muscles. Dr. J. W. Armisted, Grove Hill, Ala., graduate of the University of Alabama School of Medicine, Mobile, 1883, says: "In the cases I used Nuxated Iron I have found more beneficial results than from any preparation I have ever used in 34 years' practice." Dr. R. B. Baugh, Polkville, Miss., graduate of the Memphis Hospital College, Memphis, 1898, says: "I always prescribe Nuxated Iron where a reconstructive tonic is indicated."

CUT THIS OUT

What Nuxated Iron is Made From

Sworn Statement of Composition and its Formula

THE Board of Directors have authorized the broadest publication of the sworn statement of the composition of Nuxated Iron, so that the public may examine it for themselves and judge as to its merits.

Newspapers everywhere are invited to copy this statement for the benefit of their readers. It is suggested that physicians make a record of it and keep it in their offices so that they may intelligently answer questions of patients concerning it. Everybody is advised to cut it out and keep it. A copy of the actual sworn statement will be sent to any one who desires such. It is as follows:

Iron Peptonate (Special specific Standard) Quantity given below. Sodium Glycerophosphates U.S.P. (Monsanto.) Calcium Glycerophosphates U.S.P. (Monsanto.) P.E. Nux Vomica U.S.P. Cascarin Bitter. Magnesium Carbonate. Po. Ginger U.S.P. Oil Cassia Cinnamon U.S.P. Calcium Carbonate Precip. U.S.P.

Each dose of two tablets of Nuxated Iron contains one and one-half grains of organic iron in the form of iron peptonate of a special specific standard which in our opinion possesses superior quaities to any other known form of iron. By using other makes of Iron Peptonate we could have put the same quantity of actual iron in the tablets at less than one-fourth the cost to us, and by using metallic iron we could have accomplished the same thing at less than one-twelfth the cost; but by so doing we must have most certainly impaired their therapeutic efficacy. Glycerophosphates used in Nuxated Iron is one of the most expensive tonic ingredients known. It is especially recommended to build up the nerve force and thereby increase brain power, as glycerophosphates are said to contain phosphorous in a state very similar to that in which it is found in the nerve and brain cells of man.

As will be seen from the above, two important ingredients of Nuxated Iron (Iron Peptonate and Glycerophosphates) are very expensive products as compared with most other tonics.

Under such circumstances the temptation to adulteration and substitution by unscrupulous persons is very great, and the public is hereby warned to be careful and see every bottle is plainly labeled "NUXATED IRON" by the Dae Health Laboratories, Paris, London and Detroit U. S. A., as this is the only genuine article. If you have taken other forms of iron without success, this does not prove Nuxated Iron will not help you.

MANUFACTURERS' NOTE: Nuxated Iron recommended above is not a secret remedy but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists and general stores.

Do hurry and finish, so I can try it too!

Have you tried "the most famous skin treatment ever formulated"?

If not, you, like this girl, should begin tonight to get the benefit of this famous skin treatment, which will bring to your skin the delicate color, the lovelier freshness and clearness you nave always wanted.

Is there some condition of your skin that is keeping it from being the attractive one you want it to be?

Whatever it is—it *can* be corrected.

Every day as old skin dies, new skin forms in its place. By the proper external treatment you can make the new skin just what you would love to have it.

Begin this famous skin treatment tonight.

Once a day, just before retiring, dip a washcloth in warm water and hold it to your face until the skin is softened. Then lather your cloth well with Woodbury's Facial Soap and warm water. Apply it to your face and distribute the lather thoroughly.

Now, with the tips of your fingers, work this cleansing, antiseptic lather into your skin, always with an upward and outward motion—the colder the better. Finish by rubbing your face for a few minutes with a piece of ice. Be particular to rinse the skin thoroughly and dry it carefully.

The first time you use this treatment you will begin to realize the change it is going to make in your skin. This treatment keeps your skin so active that the new delicate skin which forms every day cannot help taking on that greater loveliness for which you have longed.

A 25c cake is sufficient for a month or six weeks of this famous skin treatment.

Get a cake today.

Send now for booklet of famous skin treatments

Send 5c and we will send you a booklet giving all of the Woodbury treatments, together with a cake of Woodbury's Facial Soap large enough for a week of any Woodbury treatment. Send to-day. Address The Andrew Jergens Co., 1707 Spring Grove Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

If you live in Canada, address The Andrew Jergens Co., Ltd., 1707 Sherbrooke St., Perth, Ontario.

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A book of the most famous skin treatments ever formulated

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